

## My Experience At The National Equality March

By Maria, a.k.a. Mizz M

So many things had been speculated about the National Equality March that took place on October 11, and there had been so much controversy and hastiness in throwing it together that no one was sure how well it would go. Well, despite all the trouble leading up to it, the march went off amazingly well, and I had a blast.

On Sunday morning, I was supposed to meet the bisexual groups that were marching at a coffee shop not far from where the march was supposed to start. I took the subway into town with another bi friend, and on the way in we ran into two guys who were together and also were going to the march. They saw our bi flags and asked what they stood for. We told them, and they responded that it made sense and they



were glad to see us out. I had also heard on the radio an announcer had been interviewing one of the organizers of the march, and the announcer had called it the "gay and lesbian march" and the organizer had corrected him "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender" march. I was amazed, and I hoped these were good omens!

We met at the coffee house. There were four official bisexual groups: BinetUSA, the New York Area Bisexual Network, the DC Bi Women, and BIMA DC, and three of them brought banners. Overall, there were about 25 of us total that showed up there. I had hoped there would be a bigger turnout, but I

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## Bi-Inclusion in the Boundless Program at Fenway Health

By Julie Ebin

*Boundless: Events promoting holistically healthy lesbian and bisexual women's communities. Transgender-friendly. Unless otherwise stated, all events are for lesbians, dykes, bisexual and pansexual women, MtFs, genderqueer folks, and same-gender-loving women but people of all genders and orientations are invited to attend. All Boundless events are FREE.*

When I started the Boundless queer women's wellness series in 2004, I wanted to make sure that Boundless would be bi-inclusive, meaning not only explicitly welcoming bisexual women in name as part of the intended audience, but also trying to walk the fine line of making the content and format inclusive of bi women, while still being queer-focused in content (i.e. info that queer women could not get elsewhere, or topics that they would feel more comfortable discussing in a queer women's workshop or event). The approach I took was to both have queer-women focused events that included information relevant to bi women (e.g. our HPV event a few years ago included information about sexual transmission and prevention of HPV between women, and also between women and men), and also having some multi-gendered bi events, because many bi folks enjoy

or prefer socializing in mixed-gender bi/queer environments. Our initial series consisted of four trans-friendly, women-focused events per year, with the occasional "open to all" event thrown in, and later when we were able to collaborate more with Fenway's men's wellness series, Living Well, we were able to have two gender-free, bi-focused events per year.

Boundless event topics, which have often come from community members, have ranged from physical well-being ("HPV from Woman to Woman: The 411 on the Vaccine and More;" "Getting Flashed: The Before, During, and After of Menopause), to mental health and bi community support ("Fighting Biphobia: What You Can Do [for bi folks and allies];" "Home for the Holidays: A One-Time Support Group"), to relationship and dating concerns ("Getting the Queer Sex You Want [And Not the Sex You Don't Want];" "Women - Is Your Partner/Boyfriend/Girlfriend Trans? A One-Time Support Group").

Other bi-specific events have included the first-ever Boundless event (before Boundless even got its name): "Bisexuality. Feminism. Heterosexual Privilege. Our Bodies." (with Robyn Ochs - this was a powerhouse kick-off event with over 50 people attending), and later, "So How's

Boundless, continues on p. 7



## HONOR ROLL

Katelynn Bishop  
Caitlyn Kekeissen  
Emilia Dunham  
Gail Zacharias  
Deb Morley  
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Paige Listrud  
S. McLaughlin  
Sarah Rowley  
Susanah Layton  
Robyn Ochs  
Sarah Prager  
Sarah Viera  
Taira Torres

And many more  
fabulous people!  
You know who  
you are!

*Bi Women* is published  
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## From your editor

The theme of this issue is "Bi Health." Related to this theme, we offer essays by Jen Bonardi, Julie Ebin, Paige Listrud, Neelima Prabhala and Mike Szymanski.

In addition, Mizz M, a.k.a. Maria, offers a bi perspective on the National Equality March, Sarah E. Rowley reviews M+04EVR, and Martina Robinson shares a poem with us.

Our "Bis Around the World" feature takes us to Portugal, our Bi of the Month is the amazing Deb Morley, and of course, we offer our fabulous calendar of events in the Boston area.

Remember, fabulous women:  
this is YOUR newsletter. Please  
consider supporting us with  
your dollars (if you have any).  
Please read the important  
announcement on page 16.

And please consider writing something for  
the next issue!

Bi for now,  
Robyn



*Bi brunch at Lucy's*

## Next in Bi Women

The theme for the Spring '10 issue:

### Bi Youth

If you are a young bi person, 25 or under, tell us your story. What is it like to be you? How did you come to identify as bisexual? Where did you learn about bisexuality? Was there a Gay/Straight Alliance in your high school? Are your friends accepting of your bisexuality? What about your family? Do you have any bi role models? Where do you get support? What advice would you give to other young people who think they might be bi?

**Submissions to the next issue  
are due by February 5th.**

*Send your submissions and  
suggestions for future topics to biwom-  
eneditor@gmail.com*

Upcoming themes will include:

Trans/Gender; Fantasy; Choice; Out at  
Work; Faith & Religion; Intersectionality;  
and more.

## Submit to Bi Women!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,  
poems, black-and-white art, news,  
and views to:

Bi Women:

[biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)

If you do not want your name published, or  
wish to use a pseudonym, please tell us.

Bi Women can be found online  
at [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.



# Bis Around the World: "Paula": the Portuguese Word for Bi Activist?

By Robyn Ochs

From July 16 through August 4, 2009, I did a European book tour to promote the new second edition of *Getting Bi*. In Oporto, Portugal, I was warmly welcomed into the home of Paula Antunes, Sofia Fonseca and their daughter Mariana. Of the first three Portuguese bi activists I had met, two were named "Paula." This led me to wonder for a moment: are *all* bi activists in Portugal named "Paula"? The answer is obviously, "no." But Paula Valenca, who has an essay in *Getting Bi*, and Paula Antunes, interviewed below, are the most prominent bi activists in Portugal. Here is an interview with Paula Antunes:

**Robyn Ochs:** Paula, please tell us about yourself.

**Paula Antunes:** I was born 33 years ago in a small town in Portugal. I love my country, bikes, reading and could spend all day long getting to know someone or something new.

**RO:** How did you come to identify as bi? How old were you? Who did you tell?

**PA:** My coming out happened quite late. I was 20 when I realized that women attracted me. For some time – a couple of years – I identified myself as a lesbian, before I realized that I was actually a bisexual woman. That was quite hard because – and I have to admit this – I had problems with the idea of not being straight or gay. At the time, the idea of being "in between" was really difficult. Over time I ended up realizing that bisexuality is a sexual orientation as valid as any other. Talking with my best friends helped me in dealing with this question, as their reaction was actually better than mine. (smiles)

**RO:** What is your religious background, and what impact did this have on your

coming out? Did it make it harder or easier? In what ways?

**PA:** I studied twelve years in catechesis in order to become a catechist. I sang in the church and I was responsible for one of the groups in MCE (Catholic Student's Movement) – a large organization of Catholic youth, so, yes I have to say that I had a religious background. Strangely enough this did not have a negative effect on my coming out. Maybe because at MCE we had Christ's philosophy, "love one another, no matter what," and that was much stronger than the church's point of view on homosexuality.



**RO:** You are a key activist in Portugal's LGBT movement. How did you become an activist? How did you first get involved in activism?

**PA:** My parents always told me, since I was five or six years old, that I was an activist. Apparently I fought racism and sexism since I was little, so growing up it was natural for me to continue to fight and change what is wrong in causes in which I believe. Homophobia is just one more wrong in my path. About 10 years ago, shortly after the first LGBT organizations appeared in Portugal, I started working with them, and I still do. (smiles)

**RO:** Are there bi organizations in Portugal?

**PA:** There is currently only one Bi organization in Portugal, which is PontoBi, with a website at [www.pontobi.org](http://www.pontobi.org). It started about four years ago in Braga and Oporto, with monthly meetings. It took a while for people to show up. Today Braga's group is "on pause" and Oporto meetings have usually 10-15 persons.

**RO:** You have been an activist for several years. What motivates you to stay involved?

**PA:** Simple. I cannot stand being part of a society that is not fair and do nothing about it. I believe that every citizen has not only the right, but also the duty to fight for a better world. When I was young, I had no chance of being fully me, since my sexual orientation was "taboo." This is something I do not want my daughter – or your children – to have to endure.

**RO:** As a bi woman, do you feel fully accepted by your fellow activists?

**PA:** Most of the time, yes. But there is clearly biphobia even amongst activists, and – I hate to have to say this – mostly homosexual ones. I don't quite understand why, but bisexuality is not yet well understood. The Portuguese LGBT movement is small, and bisexuals are an integral part of the movement, but as a bi activist, I have to say that there is much room for improvement.

**RO:** Why are you and Sofia being such wonderful, amazing, fabulous, excellent hosts to me as I sit here in your living room?

**PA:** (laughs) That's just you being nice to me. But, I have to agree with you about Sofia. She is clearly an excellent host.

Paula, continues on next page



**RO:** What good things do you have to say about Sofia?

**PA:** She was my wife, and I love her deeply. We are no longer a couple, and our love is no longer romantic love, but nonetheless we share a home and a deep, strong, lifelong love. Just don't let her know this. (smiles)

**RO:** I will be sure to send her a copy of this interview! Do you have contacts with bi and/or LGT activists in other countries? Does your knowledge of or contacts with bi or LGBT activism in other countries influence your activism here?

**PA:** Some contacts, yes. From UK, France, USA and mostly Galicia, Spain [the region of Spain closest to Oporto]. It has influenced my activism here because every time I have the chance to get to know someone new, or share information



LGBT activists in Portugal. Paula Valenca is far left, and Paula Antunes center.

with the ones I already know, I learn something new that can be used in Portuguese LGBT activism, and vice-versa. This is of course a huge advantage.

## HELP WANTED

BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Below is a list of volunteer opportunities. If there is one that interests you, please contact Robyn (biwomeneditor@gmail.com) for more information.

### STUDENTS:

#### Are You Looking for an Internship?

Are you looking for an internship during the school year or over the summer? BBWN and the Bisexual Resource Center may have something for you! Contact president@biresource.net.

#### Host a Brunch

BBWN potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area. We try to hold a brunch in a member's home each month so that people can relax and share food and experiences in a safe space.

#### Be Our Brunch Diva

Take responsibility for scheduling and serving as point person for our monthly potluck brunches. We schedule brunches 3 months in advance, and we already have brunches lined up through June. This is a very easy -- but important! -- job.

#### Want to Get Involved With Bi Women?

I'm looking for someone to help produce Bi Women. Possible roles include: Arts & Culture editor, Guest Editor for an issue on a specific theme, or Assistant Editor (if you want to learn the ropes). Thanks to the miracles of modern technology, you do not have to live in Boston.

#### Be Our Mailing Diva

Take responsibility for scheduling and coordinating our quarterly newsletter stuffings.

#### ... Or Just Show Up to a Mailing

Have fun. Stuff newsletters. Socialize and chat. Get fed.

#### Do You Know Web Design?

We're looking for someone to maintain biwomenboston.org, our new website, which uses WordPress. It's the perfect volunteer job, as you can do it from home, in your pajamas, or even in your birthday suit.

#### Pre-Pride Brunch

Most years, BBWN hosts a brunch on the morning of Boston's LGBT Pride Day (June 12th, this year). We're looking for a woman or three to coordinate this event.

#### And finally (this will be fun!):

Next year is the BRC's 25th anniversary and we're gearing up to build a killer float for 2010's Boston Pride Parade in honor of this auspicious milestone. If you're interested in being a part of the float committee, or if you have an idea for a float concept, please contact Carla at carla@imperial-jewett.com. We will be holding several planning sessions starting in December or January."

**Our goal: instead of 2 or 3 women doing 100 hours of work each, is to have 100 women doing 2 or 3 hours each.**



# The Bi Health Summit

By Julie Ebin

The 2009 Bi Health Summit was a one-day pre-conference institute (and preceding evening reception) to the 2009 National LGBTI Health Summit, which addressed bisexual health concerns and those of non-bi-identified multi-sexual women and men. It was held in Chicago, IL on August 13 and 14, and attended by about 65 people.

The organizing committee included two Boston bi women: Jen Bonardi (Co-Chair) and Julie Ebin (Co-Chair), and three others: Luigi Ferrer (Miami, FL/Co-Chair), Stewart Landers (Boston, MA) and Ed Negron (Chicago, IL).

Our activities included bisexual and bi ally visibility efforts at the Bi Health Summit and the LGBTI Health Summit, including a reporting-back on the Bi Health Summit at one of the LGBTI Health Summit plenaries, the self-selecting use of "Bi" and "Bi Ally" stickers on registrants' name tags, educational materials about recognizing and reducing biphobia and about the bisexual flag, and the noticeable presence of Bi Health Summit tee-shirts at the LGBTI Health Summit.

I opened the Bi Health Summit by thanking the organizers of the Bi Health Summit and the organizers of the LGBTI Summit for helping to make this happen. Cheryl Dobinson delivered her keynote address "Top Ten Bisexual Health Issues: What Current Research Tells Us." Stewart Landers also presented data on bisexuality and health in Massachusetts. A key point is that we now know more about our community through population-based surveys, including the fact that among lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, there are as many people who identify as bisexual as there are people who identify as lesbian and gay combined. Put another way, of those who identify as lesbian, gay or bi, 50% identify as bi. Further, among bisexuals, this is roughly 2/3 female and 1/3 male and among lesbians/gay men the ratio is reversed – 2/3 male and 1/3 female. (Apologies to transgender people who identify outside of a gender binary and to people who use other sexual identity terms, such as queer. The research producing these statistics looks only at four common sexual identity terms [straight, bisexual, gay and lesbian], and summarizes findings based on female and male genders). This 50%



statistic is an important piece of information that is now becoming more commonly acknowledged among researchers and needs to be disseminated more widely.

A small but growing body of research comparing the health of bisexuals, lesbians and gays, and heterosexuals suggests that bisexuals have worse outcomes than monosexual groups in several areas including alcoholism, drug use, depression and other mental illness, smoking, suicide ideation and violence victimization. The important take-home message is that researchers should do all they can to consider bisexuals as distinct from lesbians/gays in their analyses, so we can continue to learn more about differences among the sexual orientations.

Presentation topics ranged from bisexual health disparities, educating health providers about bisexual health, the need for bi-inclusive HIV awareness campaigns, bisexual inclusion in student LGBT groups at a health professions school, bisexual mental health and stigma in women and in African American men, a performance piece and training on bisexual men of color, and a train-the-trainer session on a curriculum-based bisexual support group.

At the end of the Summit and via the bisexual caucus, there were several individuals and group commitments to next steps. One goal is to establish a definition of Bisexual Health. Another committed to continue her work as a trainer and public speaker on Bisexual Health. A third was to have as many of us as possible sign up for the Bi Health Group on Yahoo. To sign up, go to Yahoo groups and search for "BiHealth," or send an email to BiHealth@yahoogroups.com.

Finally there was discussion about including the next Bi Health Summit as part of the next LGBTI Health Summit in 2011. People agreed with this. It was also suggested that more lesbian and gay health events be infused with substantial bisexual content. There was also a strong voice in the final session to make the Bi Health Summit more trans-inclusive. One suggestion, to address and treat people holistically, may be what is needed to improve awareness of bisexual health issues and be respectful of each person's identity. As a result of the LGBTI Summit plenary report-back, there was a suggestion to include in future efforts more discussion of bisexual community strengths and positive health actions instead of focusing only on problems and deficits.

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Presentations, bios, the Summit schedule, videos and pictures can be accessed at: [www.2009lgbtihealth.org/content/page/bi-health-summit](http://www.2009lgbtihealth.org/content/page/bi-health-summit). Many of the materials from the Bi Health Summit are also archived on the BiHealth yahoogroup.

Folks who are interested in working on a future bisexual health summit may want to start preliminary work with the 2011 LGBTI Health Summit (Portland, OR) as a possible vehicle for collaboration. Information about the 2011 LGBTI Health Summit is available at [www.2009lgbtihealth.org/content/page/2009-national-lgbti-health-summit](http://www.2009lgbtihealth.org/content/page/2009-national-lgbti-health-summit).



# Highlights of the Bi Health Summit

By Jennifer Bonardi

As a co-chair of the Bi Health Summit, I was both recharged and relieved in attending this incredible event that was 18 months in the making. To assemble in the beautiful city of Chicago and put words to power regarding our health needs was a rare and edifying experience. For those who didn't have the pleasure of joining us at this one-day summit in the summer, here are what I consider the three highlights...and they aren't what you might expect.

## Proving Our Worth

You couldn't deny that the Bi Health Summit was interesting, empowering, and chock full of facts and opinions regarding all aspects of bisexuality and health. But still, some asked: what was the point? Why did we need this conference? Specifically, why should we focus on bi health? Why can't we lump it in with either straight health or gay health depending on the actions of the people at hand?

From the summit came the answer: researchers presented findings that showed bisexuals having worse outcomes than straights and gays/lesbians in areas of smoking/alcohol/drug use, depression and suicide ideation, and violence victimization. Some presenters indicated that



they were actively discouraged from conducting research on bisexuals; ironically, the work they were able to do indicated that even more research specific to bisexuals is needed. The summit successfully conveyed the idea that, however counterintuitive it may seem initially, focusing on sexual identity instead of activity when analyzing health issues yields critical data.

## Minorities of a Minority Within a Minority

In my senior year at Tufts, I remember walking into the first TLGBC meeting of the semester, surveying the room full of new faces, and looking at the two other coordinators with glee. They returned my look with the same silent message: "Hallelujah—we finally have some queer people *who aren't white!*" That familiar feeling washed over me again as I took my place at the Bi Health Summit.

It was a pleasure to see a great representation of people of color both attending and presenting at the Bi Health Summit. Their points of view undoubtedly enriched the exchange of information that day, reminding us that one's experience as a bisexual can differ according to culture. I find that when minorities within a community don't come to the table, it's often because they haven't been invited. The fact that we saw such diversity among our ranks that day makes me optimistic that much more of our community feels welcome to be there.

## Sticking with Our Allies

One of our co-chairs had the great idea of providing stickers at registration that said "Bi" or "Bi Ally" and featured the bi flag. Attendees not only stuck them on their plastic name tags during the Bi Health Summit but also proudly wore them throughout the rest of the LGBTI Health Summit. The stickers were a big hit, and the visual representation of bi people at the larger summit made a real statement.

But I found the most inspiring aspect of the sticker-wearing to be the number of folks who wore the "Bi Ally" stickers. I hadn't realized how validating it would be to see so many people who, although not bisexual themselves, were squarely and openly in our corner. You *hope* that there are bi allies out there, particularly among our LGTI friends, but to see that confirmed through a sea of supporters was truly fulfilling.

The above highlights of the Bi Health Summit may be interesting but reading them pales in comparison to actually participating in the event. If you couldn't make it to this year's summit, I urge you to attend the next one which will likely be in 2011.

*Jen Bonardi is a Board Member of the Bisexual Resource Center.*



Julie Ebin, Brother Michael (Chicago), Ed Negron (Chicago), Jen Bonardi



Julie Ebin, Cheryl Dobinson (Toronto), Stewart Landers (Boston)



*Boundless, continued from page 1*

Your Bi/QueerLove Life? An Exploration of Dating and Relationships;" "Celebrate Bisexuality Day: Celebrating our Health;" a bi double header – "Bi Stress Busters" discussion and "Putting the Bi in Bicycle – A Bike Repair Workshop;" and various Celebrate Bisexuality Day events. Robyn also generously donated her time to present many bi awareness workshops as part of the series ("Creating a Both-And Identity in an Either-Or World;" "Bisexuality, Strength and Courage").

One of my favorite events, "Breasts, Boobies, and Bosoms, Oh My!" featured Kim Airs of Grand Opening, who took the audience through a romp of appropriate breast supports (right bra size, anyone?), mammograms demystified (and appointments sign-up), Kim Airs' personal stories and gossip, and a fabulously witty demo

of how to do a breast self-exam. We even had a raffle of breast art, and a delicious breast cake for dessert.

I, and more recently, Gillian Connolly and Katie Stetler, could not have created the series we did without many people's support of leading workshops, collaborating, co-hosting, and just plain spreading the word. I was also privileged to work with various interns and volunteers throughout the years, some queer, some straight, some seeking undergraduate or graduate class credit, and some who just wanted to help out. These folks were instrumental in organizing Boundless events over the years. Thank you to all of the Boundless supporters so far, and all of those to come!

I have especially enjoyed collaborating on events. At times these have been in-depth partnerships where we have worked with organizations to find out what their members or

communities want, and how we can serve them. A great example of was an event that I guest-facilitated in collaboration with hosts Mad Femme Pride, "Asking for What You Want: Queer Women Doing Safer Sex for Themselves!" held on November 18th. Based on discussions with Mad Femme Priders, the workshop was for queer/bi/lesbian women, and the focus was on safer sex (primarily between women) including: why have it, how to do it, and how to talk about it.

To get added to the Boundless mailing list, contact Katie Stetler, current Boundless Coordinator at (617) 927-6028 or [boundless@fenwayhealth.org](mailto:boundless@fenwayhealth.org).

**The next Boundless event is the Fighting Biphobia, Part 2 program on January 28th. Free and open to all. Contact Katie to register.**

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## Bisexuality 101: Are there health issues specific to bisexuality?

*By Mike Szymanski*

Do bisexuals have health concerns that are different from everyone else, or ignored by the overall mainstream and gay and lesbian communities?

The quick answer is a resounding "yes."

And certainly these issues are not so very obvious to the mainstream health practitioners, or the experts who handle only gay, lesbian and trans issues.

There are 10 major health concerns that are particular to bisexuals, as detailed in a National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Report.

\* Some statistics show that bisexual youth in particular have more attempts at suicide and feel more alienated than even their gay and lesbian counterparts who have a growing social and support network around them. A suicide prevention study in Australia found that bi women and bi men have the highest percentages of suicide attempts (35 and 29 percents). Bi youth between 14 and 21, in a University of Minnesota study, were more likely to be suicidal than any other group.

\* Because of the complex relationship between self-identity and behavior, studies intended to address the health needs of MSMW and WSMW do not always properly reach their targets.

\* Bisexual women have higher rates of breast cancer, and bi women have the highest rate of never having a PAP test to screen for cervical cancer.

\* Bisexual men who are in partnerships with women may tend to avoid the "bisexual" label and be more closeted, which could subject them to more unsafe sexual practices, dangerous situations and mental stresses that their heterosexual counterparts do not face.

\* Bisexual women in clinical and community samplings have received lower standards of mental and health care.

\* Bisexuals of any gender skew high on some studies for drug use, tobacco use, alcohol abuse and illegal drug activity. Bisexual women report the highest use of alcohol compared to hetero or lesbian women. Bi women also are shown to smoke cigarettes more.

\* Questionable conversion or reparative therapies that supposedly

convert people from same-sex attraction to opposite-sex attractions often ignore the possibility of bisexuality.

\* Bisexual women are known to have a higher rate of eating disorders, and more of them are overweight and underweight in comparison to their hetero and lesbian counterparts.

\* Bisexuals are generally an invisible group, forgotten, ignored or deliberately left out of studies, polls or medical questionnaires because it is more complicated or muddies the studies.

\* Bisexual women have a higher likelihood of developing heart disease and greater risk factors for heart ailments.

\* Closeted bisexual men could be more susceptible to Hepatitis, crystal meth use, HIV infection, sexually transmitted diseases and other concerns. A University of California, San Francisco study found that bi men are five times more likely to have used crystal meth than the general population.

\* Bisexual women choosing to get pregnant, or seeking prenatal

*Health Issues, continues p. 9*



was glad to see the people that came. I heard later that there were other bisexual people marching with other groups, so I'm guessing that there were probably quite a few of us overall.

We gathered together with the rest of the crowd – I looked around, and in every direction I had never seen so many people! There were all kinds of neat signs, outfits, and flags. We got our banners ready, tried to line up as best as we could (there was no official order for the groups to line up in) and waited. We waited for about an hour before things started, by which point it was getting hot and we were ready to go!

Around one o'clock, we started to march. It was quite fun, people came up with all kinds of chants, and as we walked, people came out of office buildings and stood on the sidewalks and cheered us on. There were press and camera people all over filming us and taking pictures – I don't think I've ever seen so many in one place! There was only one heckler – and he didn't get too far. Other groups started marching with us, one example being a group that was marching for breast cancer awareness. It was really great to march – the only thing that got annoying was that there was no official order for how the groups were supposed to organize. Although everyone was marching however best they could, groups kept getting separated. Our own groups got separated several times.

Some people found a "shortcut" through the white house lawn! So we walked through there and took some great pictures of people standing in front of the White House holding their banners. Then we marched on, until we hit the west lawn of the Capitol, tired and thirsty! Everyone tried to get as close as they could to where the speeches were going to be, and people found places to sit. We sat pretty far up, but still not close enough to actually see the speakers, although we could hear them. The speeches were moving and inspiring, and they energized the crowd, even though people were tired from marching. In the opening convocation, several GLBT pioneers were mentioned, and to my pleasant surprise, they mentioned a bisexual one. Pretty much all of the speakers said GLBT, some even going so far as to say all four words.

#### Marchers at the Capitol

There were four bisexual speakers – Penelope Williams, Lady Gaga, Michael Huffington, and Chloe Noble. Except for Lady Gaga (who I already knew to be bisexual), each one of the speakers used the word bisexual and conveyed that they were proud to be part of the bisexual community. It was great to hear the thunderous applause after they said it. They all did wonderfully well and I am so proud of them and honored that they represented us. I actually felt well-represented and acknowledged as a bisexual for once.

What was truly amazing about this

day was all the energy of the crowd – I could literally feel it – and it energized and motivated me as well. Near the end of the march my feet were killing me, but I marched on because I really believed in what I was marching for. The best part was, I felt totally included that day. Everyone who saw our bi groups was friendly and welcoming, and one of the groups even got interviewed for GLBT.TV.com! It was a great opportunity to come together and focus on the positive and what is best about your community instead of our divisions.

The march seems to have made a real impact – several media outlets have been talking about it. I hope that people can take the positives from it and use it for local activism. Most importantly, I hope that the message of inclusion will bring equality for the BLGT community, and will also inspire more inclusion in the BLGT community itself, especially towards the B and the T.

Video of the speeches is available at <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/289403-1>. (bisexual speakers are at 1:39:10, 1:42:42, 3:04:22, and 3:45:25).

NOTE: This article is excerpted, with permission and minor edits, from an article on [bisocialnews.com](http://bisocialnews.com). Visit this site for more excellent articles!

## Long-time Bi Activist Loraine Hutchins Honored

Bi activist and academic Loraine Hutchins was honored on October 21<sup>st</sup> as Washington, D.C.'s Community Pioneers as one of 20 honorees (and the only out bisexual) honored this year. The Rainbow History Archive, ([rainbowhistory.org](http://rainbowhistory.org)) which conferred the award, has honored pioneers every two years since 2003. "Not many out bi's have been honored," says Loraine. "I think only me and Billy Jones (in a past year) – but there may have been one or two other folks who identified quietly as bi, just not as a major aspect of their work/identity."

A fourth-generation D.C. native, Loraine is a tireless activist who has worked as a sex educator and helped kick-off important bisexual organizations such as the Washington, D.C. based Alliance of Multi-Cultural Bisexuals (not currently active) and BiNet USA. Loraine co-edited *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexuals Speak Out*, which was named among the 100 most influential LGTB books of the 20th Century. She teaches in the Washington, D.C. area and has an essay in *Getting Bi*. Congratulations, Loraine!

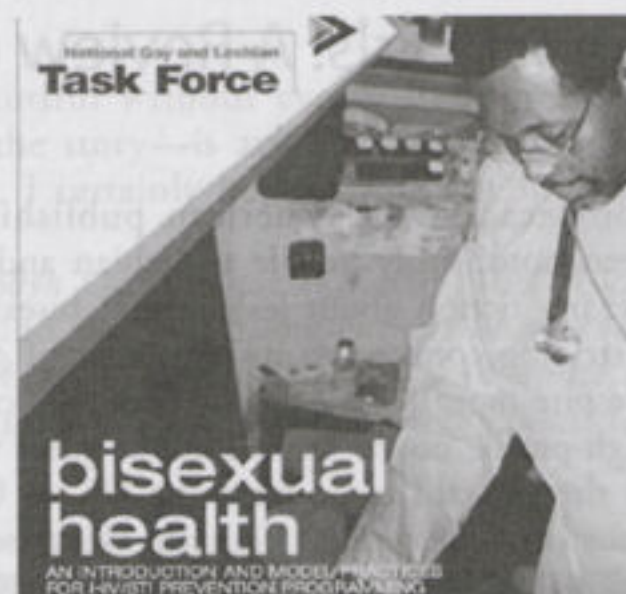


care have faced discrimination and outright rejection from the medical establishment.

\* Bisexual men and women have higher levels of depression and anxiety than heterosexuals, and in some levels similar to or higher than lesbians and gay men.

To access the entire Bisexual Health Report, visit [www.thetaskforce.org/reports\\_and\\_research/bisexual\\_health](http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/bisexual_health).

*Excerpted with minor edits with author's permission from an August 11, 2009 article in the Bisexuality Examiner. Mike's articles can be found at: [www.Examiner.com/x-3366-Bisexuality-Examiner](http://www.Examiner.com/x-3366-Bisexuality-Examiner).*



## Bisexuals and Mental Health

By Neelima Prabhala

Until fairly recently, mental health and mental problems were not viewed as legitimate health concerns, but rather were seen as a lack of will on the part of the sufferer to get over something. Science has taught us better: we know that illnesses such as depression and anxiety are often caused by chemical imbalances and *can* be treated. Although brain chemistry likely plays a role in mental illnesses like anxiety and depression, it is essential to recognize the social factors that affect mental health. Your sexual orientation is a part of who you are and affects your needs.

These issues are real and affect the bisexual community severely. Bisexuals face the challenges of our society's insistence on a binary system: gay or straight. Many people simply do not believe in bisexuality. Being told you do not exist does not help anyone's mental state, and is especially difficult for people who are questioning or having difficulties with their sexuality.

Lack of support is a major cause of depression and other mental health problems. In this binary world, bisexuals are often rejected from both straight and gay communities. Some straight people cannot accept or deal with the 'gay' side or will pretend you are straight and perhaps experimenting

or confused or, heaven forbid, 'going through a phase.' Some gays and lesbians suspect that your same-sex attractions are not genuine, or that you are in denial about your "true" gay or lesbian identity. This lack of acceptance makes it very difficult to get necessary support. We all need support for problems and obstacles not related to our sexuality, but when our sexual identities are denied by others it is difficult to trust them with other parts of our identities. Bi support groups can provide a group of people who will accept you whether you are a two or a five on the Kinsey Scale. A bi support group – as opposed to a general support group or just an TBGL support group – can help support you during hard times and understand your specific experiences as a bisexual person.

Finding a bi support group is not as easy as it may sound. In big cities there are more likely to be resources. But smaller communities may only have a queer support group – if even that. But there *are* resources out there for bisexuals, whether they be online communities or meetings that you have to travel to attend. And it is worth it for your mental health to find a place where you can know, not hope, that you'll be accepted as a bisexual.

Biphobia may also pose challenges for people seeking support from a therapist. Many therapists, even ones specializing in queer patients and issues, do not understand bisexuality or issues regarding the community, and it would be difficult to come out to your therapist and be met with rejection or misunderstanding. But studies have shown that closetedness with one's therapist is extremely detrimental to one's mental health.

Finding support is imperative to your health, whether it comes from friends, family members, a group, and/or a therapist. Support tailored to your sexuality could be a positive part of your life. It is not always easy to find that bi-safe space, but it is well worth the trouble.

Note: One place to look for resources about bisexual mental health is: <http://www.bisexual.org/resources.html#bicounseling>

*Neelima is from Boston and is a freshman at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. Her hobbies include photography, martial arts and sports.*



## Ghost Girls: A Review of Tonya Cherie Hegamin's *M+O4EVR*

Reviewed by Sarah E. Rowley

For decades, the American publishing industry has been notoriously hostile to lesbian and bisexual women writing fiction about lesbian and bisexual characters, in a striking contrast to its treatment of gay male authors. Despite more than a decade of public conversation, most high-profile novels by and about queer women published in the US still come from the UK or Canada, from the pens of white authors Jeanette Winterson, Sarah Waters, Emma Donoghue, Helen Humphreys, and the like.

The one exception has been Young Adult (YA) literature, which has experienced a great boon since the Harry Potter books proved not only that adults would openly read it, but also that it could immensely profit publishers. Simultaneous with the general rise of YA's profile has been growing concern with queer youth, leading to an explosion of novels about LGBT teens. While boys' stories still outnumber girls' and the very occasional trans teen tale, the YA aisle has become one of the best places to find LGBT fiction.

But these LGBT novels, like YA lit in general, have remained overpoweringly white. I know of only two YA novels about queer African-American girls—Rosa Guy's *Ruby*, probably the only black nationalist lesbian YA novel, and Jacqueline Woodson's slender but poetic *The House You Pass on the Way*. *Ruby*, published in 1976, has all of its era's negative stereotypes about same-sex relationships (including a suicide attempt and the idea that the heroine can be romantically redeemed by a man), but remains fascinating for its politics and portrayal of 1970s New York City. *The House You Pass on the Way*, from African-American YA powerhouse Woodson, has a quietly affecting story and achingly beautiful writing, but ends abruptly after only 90 pages.

In this context, it's a real pleasure to discover a third novel about a queer African-American girl, especially one as moving and skillfully written as Tonya Cherie Hegamin's *M+O4EVR*.

*M+O4EVR* shares a number of similarities with *The House You Pass on the Way*. Both novels are concerned with rural African-Americans—another under-represented group—and family legacies (the protagonist of *The House You Pass on the Way* suffers more socially in her black town from being the granddaughter of two Civil Rights martyrs than she does from her crush on another girl). They share, too, the distinction of being uncommonly well-written, every word as precisely chosen as poetry.

But *M+O4EVR* stands on its own. Its heroine and narrator, Opal or O, has been in love with her best friend, Marianne or M, all her life. The daughter of loving but absent parents, O has been raised by her grandmother, Gran, who has also embraced

Marianne, a biracial girl living with her troubled white relatives. Together the girls have rambled ("my brown hand in her yellow one") through the fields and woods of their rural Pennsylvania town, pretending to be the African goddesses Mlapo and Omali and trying to catch sight of Hannah, the ghost of an escaped slave who haunts a nearby ravine.

But in high school Marianne has tried to find popularity by ditching the tomboyish O, who has clearly built her life around M, sacrificing her own dreams at the altar of her love for her self-destructing friend. When Marianne breezes back into her life the day after becoming the town's first black homecoming queen, O, drowning in her unrequited passion, can't help but follow along.

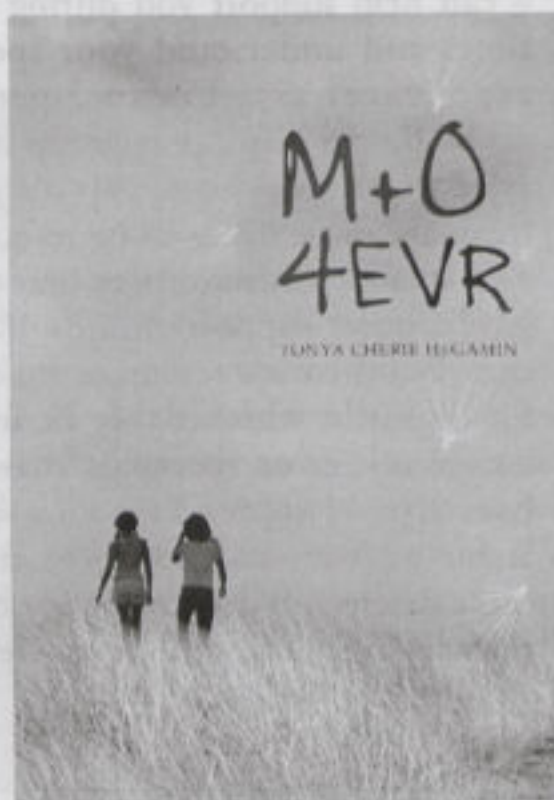
Hegamin drops us into the middle of the girls' complicated relationship and lets the layers of personal and family history unfold slowly, one by one. From the moment the vivacious but insecure Marianne burst onto the page we the readers know she's headed for trouble, but we're as shocked as Opal when she dies unexpectedly, in the same ravine Hannah did, at the end of chapter two.

The rest of the book traces O's struggle to grieve, make sense of Marianne's demons, and regain a sense of who she is without her beloved obsession. In this she has the help of her family, particularly her Gran, who tells her, "Black folks got enough ghosts in this country to be haunted until the end of time. Why you want to haunt yourself with the one ghost that's trying to leave you in peace?"

Another ghost, that of Hannah the escaped slave, also appears in the novel, and O & M's story is interwoven with hers, a tale that Gran has told so many times Opal knows it by heart. In it Hannah finds passion and a new beginning with a black Nanticoke man, and her sections of the book echo the themes of love and the need for freedom.

While the ghost story pales beside the more vivid present-day action, it does provide a sense of history and community, which is perhaps exactly what Opal needs. It's strongly implied that Marianne's tragedy comes in large part from the harassment she has received from whites for not fitting neat racial categories, and her family's inability to provide protection and a sense of history. Opal, in coming to understand why M could not accept her love, find her own new beginning.

Though sad in places, *M+O4EVR* is deeply moving. While Hegamin makes you feel the ugliness of racism in M & O's world—for example, in O's abiding disgust for Walmart, the giant chain store where a pair of white girls taunted



*Ghost Girls, continues on next page*



*Ghost Girls, continued from previous page*

M as a child—she's equally gifted at communicating love, as in the scene in which O's quiet father uses a story about constellations to tell her a truth she doesn't know she needs to hear. I'm afraid that readers will be scared off by the death in this book and miss out on a lovely reading experience.

All of the characters, from the wild Marianne to the self-effacing O to all their associated relatives are vividly drawn. And Tonya Cherie Hegamin's language—clear,

precise, and beautiful without ever distracting from the primacy of the story—is a pleasure to read. This is her first novel. I certainly hope it won't be her last.

*Sarah is (with Robyn Ochs) editor of Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World and current board chair of The Network/La Red, which works to end abuse in lesbian, bisexual women's, and transgender communities.*

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## 2009 Bi Health Summit: Top Ten Things To Do for Bi Health

*By Paige Listrud*

I see the world through an activist lens. Give me facts, give me info, but above all, give me ideas on what to do next. By the end of the Bi Health Summit, the last hour and a half of programming, you could feel the brain death. Everyone was wiped, probably experiencing information overload, and finding focus for creating a bisexual health agenda became difficult.

How grateful was I, then, when Stephen Simon, AIDS Co-ordinator for the City of Los Angeles, pulled off a BiHealth Top Ten list, drawn from the 25 recommendations crafted by Julie Ebin, Marshal Miller, Amy Andre, and Leona Bessonova in their groundbreaking bisexual health report. Yes, Stephen, I still owe you.

### **Top Ten Things To Do For Bisexual Health Advocacy**

**Take non-programmatic steps** to make your agency or practice as a whole more inclusive of bisexual people by having posters and pamphlets with "bisexual" or "LGBT" prominently mentioned (rather than just "gay and lesbian") in your waiting area. Use these terms in advertising and outreach materials.

**Fund programs!** Recognize that there are significant health disparities and that traditional gay or lesbian-focused programs and services do not necessarily address the needs of MSMW/WSMW\* of any identity.

**Create programs that specifically target bisexual people**, tailoring them according to the needs of your community. If it's not feasible to replicate these programs at this time, you can still revise existing programs to be more inclusive.

**Understand the difference between sexual identity and sexual behavior.** Promote this understanding to your colleagues, staff and boss.

**Increase research that targets bisexual people specifically**, asking both behavioral and identity-based questions. The research is fundamental, as funders and practitioners need it to be able to fund and create programs and services.

**Recruit MSMW/WSMW\* and bisexually-identified individuals for policy and/or funding advisory groups and grant/proposal readers.**

**Work together to provide training on bisexuality for local health groups.** Distribute information on bisexuality to your own and other area health providers. Ask your own and other doctors/counselors/therapists to have the materials available for their colleagues, in their waiting rooms and anywhere that bisexuals might need to be welcomed.

**In the general health arena, attend professional and grassroots national health conferences** and speak out on issues that affect MSMW, WSMW, and bisexuals.

**In the bisexual arena, support health organizing and educational efforts** at national and international bisexual or bisexually-inclusive conferences.

**Help the Bisexual Health Summits to go forward.**

While the list clearly targets healthcare professionals and people working in larger mainstream agencies, a street-level activist can get a lot of mileage by just promoting a few things on this list. The Fenway Health Institute has bi-specific safer sex pamphlets and safer sex pamphlets that integrate safer sex for WSMW and MSMW, whatever their identity.

Julie Ebin has helped to develop at Fenway bisexual health clinical education modules that are designed to assist training of healthcare providers to be culturally competent with their sexually fluid clients. The modules can be used in

\*men & women who have sex with men and women

*Top Ten Things, continues on p. 14*



## Bi Woman of the Month: An Interview with Deb Morley

By Malkah Feldman

**Malkah Feldman:** When did you discover you were bisexual?

**Deb Morley:** I discovered I was bisexual when I was 31. In hindsight, there was a lot of information along the way that could have led me to discovering my bisexuality much earlier, but when I came out as a lesbian at age 15, I was exposed to a very binary (gay or straight) queer community that included much bias against bisexuality.

**MF:** How and when did you come out to friends, family and co-workers?

**DM:** Coming out to my lesbian friends as bisexual was scary as I feared rejection. I was fortunate that I had recently started a graduate program that was already introducing me to many new beginnings. A woman from my program posted a query to our class email list asking if anyone was doing research on the information needs of the gay, lesbian, bisexual community. I emailed her back saying, "No I'm not, but yes I am!" This woman became my first bi friend. It was like the Universe sending me an angel to help me during this challenging and sometimes confusing transition of my identity. I told my close friends and family very early in my "coming out as bi" process. I explained that I had fallen for a guy, that it was more than just sexual exploration, and that I had feelings for him. At the time I chose not to share this news with co-workers as the man I was involved with was a co-worker! Note to self, going forward: "Don't date people from your workplace!" Since then, coming out to co-workers as bisexual has been a tricky thing. I have chosen to maintain certain boundaries between my personal life and my professional life. While many co-workers know that I am queer, as I speak openly about my same-sex partner in the work place, I would guess that most assume I am lesbian and don't even think about bisexuality. I have had a few opportunities to mention to a co-worker when I have attended a conference on bisexuality, but for the most part I haven't felt that there have been many appropriate moments to talk about my sexuality independently from my relationship. So while my relationship provides me the opportunity to come out as being in a same-sex relationship, it also masks my bi identity. Overall I'm OK with this because I don't have close relationships with my co-workers, and at least they know I'm queer!

**MF:** What helped you to develop a positive self-image?

**DM:** Having a bi friend, attending bi support groups, learning to love and accept myself, and going to conferences



on bisexuality are some of the many things I have done to develop a positive self-image. I have also read about bisexuality, become friends with more bi people, marched with the bi contingent in Gay Pride marches. I have also been involved with BBWN and the Bisexual Resource Center.

**MF:** You have done an enormous amount of work for BBWN. What have you done and how has it been for you?

**DM:** I have written and participated in *Bi Women* mailings of for over eight years now and co-coordinated the mailing for about four years. I have helped to organize the BBWN brunches that many fabulous women have hosted in their homes over the last eight years. Some years I have helped with the setup and cleanup of the pre-Pride brunch that BBWN hosts. I have had the opportunity to speak on a bi panel out in western Mass where I represented BBWN. I also attend other BBWN events that others organize, i.e. a movie night, dinner out or bowling. I love bi bowling! Compared to the work done by some others, I feel my contributions have been modest.

**MF:** What does it mean to you to be bisexual? Does it have spiritual and/or creative energy to it?

**DM:** For me, being bisexual means that my heart is open to all genders. It does have a spiritual essence for me because it is a part of who I am.

**MF:** Deb, do you feel that there are links between the struggles to free ourselves to be bisexual and other movements like the struggles against racism and poverty?



**DM:** Yes. I think there are commonalities between all groups who experience oppression. Sometimes oppression is imposed upon us by others, and sometimes it comes from within ourselves. I feel that our internalized fears are most important to address. I see self-hatred and self-loathing eat away at so many people. We may look outside of ourselves for validation, and it's great when we receive it, but at the end of the day I believe it is the love looking back from the mirror that sustains one's wholeness.

**MF:** Are you single or are you in a relationship? How does your partner accept your bisexual identification?

**DM:** I am in a relationship. My partner completely accepts me as bi. As an undergraduate student (years ago) she supported the name change of her campus's gay and lesbian student group to include "bisexual." She gets it, and I deeply appreciate that she gets it.

**MF:** Despite being in a committed relationship, could you talk about how your spirit, as they say in Native American communities, is "two spirited," as fully capable of bonding with either sex. Do you relate to this question, and if so, could you discuss what that special two spirit openness means to you?

**DM:** I do relate to this question. I feel that the "two spirited openness" that you speak of is a gift. It's a gift of potential to love and be loved on many different levels. I had two significant realizations when I came out as bi. One was that my sexual attraction and interest in men did not lessen those same feelings that I have towards women. Now it sounds odd to me, but I can remember really struggling with this concept and wondering (because I had identified as lesbian for so many years) how could I now be interested in a male lover? Had my life up until this point been a lie? The other significant realization was that I no longer needed to carry around the weight of the anger and resentment towards men that I had felt, or at least thought I should feel. Some of the lesbian-separatist spaces in which I had spent time had influenced my attitudes towards men. Although I am still a strong feminist, the feelings of pitting men as the enemy completely evaporated when I allowed my "two spirited" self to be. I hadn't even realized what a weight and limitation these false beliefs had been for me.

I remember going to hear Maya Angelou speak a couple of years ago and her saying, "we are born to become exactly who we are." I think this is so profound. It seems so obvious, and deceptively simple! Who knew it would be a life long journey?

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## Getting Bi for the Holidays...

"Getting Bi is a stunning collection of first-person narratives by bisexuals from around the world. The term bisexual functions as a useful shorthand for a broad spectrum of sexualities: as the editors note in the Introduction, some contributors self-identify as queer, pansexual, omnisexual, or labelless, while others acknowledge attractions to multiple genders while identifying as lesbian, gay, or heterosexual. This complexity infuses the book at every level, as writers differ not only in their definitions of bisexuality, but also in their politics, spiritualities, sexual practices, and patterns of daily life. ... Most of the essays are conversational in tone and personal in content, as the writers discuss coming out, the choice to identify (or not) as bisexual, life experiences, sexual desire, bi community, and political activism.

Many anthologies aspire to be international in scope, but few achieve that vision. ... *Getting Bi* is an astounding achievement."

—Robin Bernstein, Assistant Professor of Women, Gender & Sexuality, Harvard University

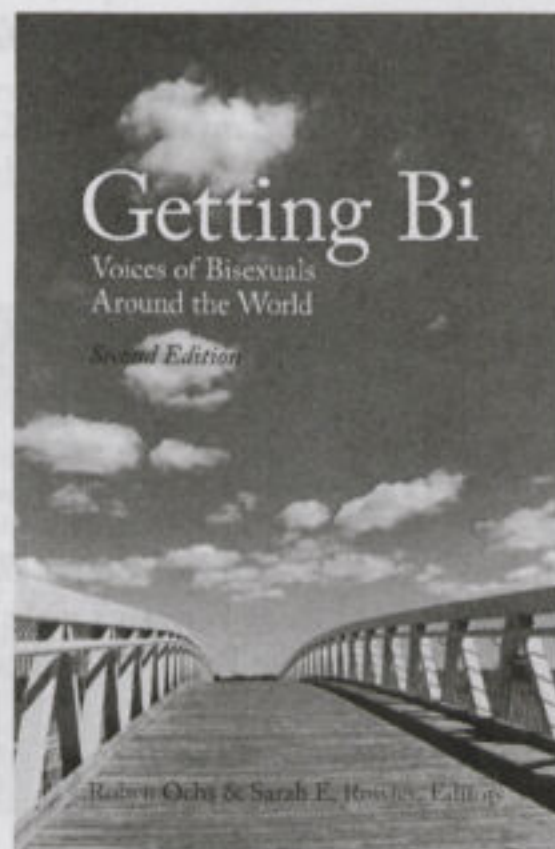
**This book would make a great holiday gift:**

**\*\* to show your support for a bisexual friend or family member**

**\*\* to help a friend or family member understand YOU**

**Order *Getting Bi* today from [Biresource.net](http://Biresource.net).**

All proceeds go directly to the Bisexual Resource Center.





# Emergence

*My own coming out poem, written in part to celebrate National Coming Out Day!*

*By Martina Robinson*

My mother blamed women's studies coursework, badly behaved men, and the self-loathing she assumed existed within my personal psyche for the bisexuality I confessed that summer evening on Sasha's borrowed cell in Jana's house a baker's dozen summers ago.

I remember hiding afterwards unable to answer phone for three months solid for fear of being found.

I remember moving from friend's house to friend's house and new assistant to new assistant. One big ball of perpetual motion.

I remember thinking it would be so much easier to surrender to my mother's will than trying to survive this way, but deciding I was simply too proud to resubmit soul to someone else's decision making power.

Despite the hardship, that particular summer was I remember absolute joy at never having to unqueer my house, bookshelf, life again merely because the 'rents were visiting.



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*Martina is a 32-year-old disabled, bisexual woman, person of faith and multi-issue activist who ran for Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts on the Green-Rainbow Party in 2006.*

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**Top Ten Things**, continued from p. 11

tandem with the institute's book, *The Fenway Guide to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health*. The modules can be downloaded from Fenway's website, and are free. Hear that, administrators? Free, free, free!

It looks like Portland will be the next spot for the 2011 Bi Health Summit. Stay tuned.

*Reprinted with the author's permission, with minor edits, from her blog at [opensalon.com](http://opensalon.com).*



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## Calendar, *continued from page 16*

acknowledge the work of the past year, vote on the board members for next year, and start planning ahead for 2010. Dinner and socializing 6-7:00 pm, meeting 7-9:00 pm. Email Ellyn at [president@biresource.net](mailto:president@biresource.net) for more info. At the Boston Living Center.

**Monday, December 14, 7 p.m. Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Info: [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com).

**Thursday, December 17, 7 p.m. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** Third Thursday meetings are 7-8 p.m. check-ins, discussion, and announcements followed by social time at a nearby restaurant. Only want to socialize? Meet the group at or shortly after 8 p.m. in the lobby of the Boston Living Center.

**Saturday, December 19, 11:30am. Bi Brunch.** This mixed gender bi group meets 3rd Saturday of the month at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq. in Somerville. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

## JANUARY

**Wednesday, January 6, 6:30-9pm. Bisexual Social & Support Group.** (See 12/2)

**Sunday, January 10, noon.** Join us for BBWN's 4th Annual Poetry Brunch hosted by Fennel in Watertown. Please bring a potluck dish or drinks to share, and a poem (written by you or someone else) that you have enjoyed and would like to read aloud. Contact Fennel at 617-744-0346 or [resourcegoddess@comcast.net](mailto:resourcegoddess@comcast.net) for directions and to let her know you are coming & what dish you plan to bring. Plenty of street parking, and on the bus line. RSVP by January 8 for directions/contact info.

**Tuesday, January 12, 7-9 p.m. BRC Board Meeting.** (See December 8th)

**Saturday, January 16, 11:30 a.m. Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See December 19th)

**Thursday, January 21, 7 p.m. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** (See December 17th)

**Thursday, January 28, 6:30. Fighting Biphobia, Part 2.** Facilitated by Robyn Ochs and Cosponsored BBWN, BRC and Fenway's Boundless Program. Free. All are welcome. For info/RSVP: contact Katie at 617-927-6028 or [boundless@fenwayhealth.org](mailto:boundless@fenwayhealth.org).

## FEBRUARY

**Wednesday, February 3-Sunday, February 7, Creating Change Conference,** Dallas, Texas. The Task Force produces the nation's preeminent political, leadership and skills-building conference for the LGBT social justice movement. Special all-day Bi Institute on Thursday! Visit [www.creatingchange.org](http://www.creatingchange.org) to find out how you can join hundreds of other queer activists to help change the world.

**Wednesday, February 3, 7 p.m. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** (See December 2nd)

**Monday, February 8, 7 p.m. Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See December 14th)

**Tuesday, February 9, 7-9 p.m. BRC Board Meeting.** (See December 8th)

**Sunday, February 14, 12-3 pm, BBWN Brunch in Cambridge at Jen's.** Contact Jen at [jbonardi@hotmail.com](mailto:jbonardi@hotmail.com) to let her know that you'll be attending and what food you'll bring (Valentine's-themed food encouraged). We will, of course, be chatting about our most romantic and most horrifying Valentine's Days!

**Thursday, February 18, 7 p.m. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** (See December 17th)

**Saturday, February 20, 11:30 a.m. Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See December 19th)

Join us at one of  
BBWN's fabulous  
potluck brunches for bi women  
and our friends. Our brunches  
are held in women's homes, and  
ALL women are welcome. See our  
calendar (pp. 15 and 16) for details.





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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

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## Ongoing Events

### Last Fridays:

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30-9pm at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

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### 2nd Mondays:

**Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** 7pm. Email [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com) for more info.

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### 1st Wednesdays, 3rd Thursdays:

**BLISS: Bisexual Support & Social Group.** 7-8:45pm. Meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

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### 3rd Saturdays:

**Biversity Bi Brunch.** 11:30am at Johnny D's, Davis Square, Somerville.

*Sign up for our new email list!*

*Send an email to: [biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)*



## Ask not what Bi Women can do for you ...

*Exhausted by the torrents of biphobia and bi-invisibility heaped upon her, Sara was at the end of her rope. She needed support. She needed affirmation. She struggled to hold back another round of tears. But where to turn? Poor Sara didn't know about Bi Women.*

**But fortunately, you do.**

*We're begging you, as we're sure Sara would have begged had she known of the existence of this important lifeline, to donate at least twenty dollars to help keep Bi Women alive. The need is real and we need your help because we never want another woman to suffer the same fate as poor Sara.*

Help us send *Bi Women* to you, to other women, and also to community centers, youth and campus LGBT groups. Think of the support that *Bi Women* has provided to you, and give generously because your contribution will indeed make a difference in many, many lives. It will only take a minute and you will make a difference.

So far, we have raised \$1081 toward our annual goal of \$5000. No amount is too small (and no amount is too large).

Make your checks payable to BBWN, PO Box 301727, Jamaica Plain MA 02130. Or you can donate on line via paypal to [biwomenboston@gmail.com](mailto:biwomenboston@gmail.com). For more information, visit our website: [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).

**Remember: YOU can make a difference.**

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# CALENDAR

## DECEMBER

**Wednesday, December 2, 7-8:45 p.m.**  
**Bisexual Social and Support Group (BlISS) meets on the 1st Wednesday and 3rd Thursday** of each month at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations are welcome to attend. 1st Wednesday meetings are peer facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Contact [brc@biresource.net](mailto:brc@biresource.net) for more info.

**Friday, December 4-Sunday, December 6, Holly Folly Weekend in Provincetown.** A perfect weekend to get away and enjoy pre-holiday shopping, a walk on the beach, a raucous sing-along at the Crown & Anchor, the Gay Men's Chorus concert and much more. Info: [www.HollyFolly.com](http://www.HollyFolly.com).

**Saturday, December 5, 7 p.m.**  
**madFemmePride presents: An UnLadyLike Party:** a dress up / dress down / mingle / dance party at Club Cafe, 209 Columbus Ave, Boston. Dress = drag it up (whatever's drag for you). Wear your Saturday best (or vest). Come in costume, flaunt 6" heels, stroll over in street clothes, go glitter-crazy, pop your collar, rock a tie, defy dress codes, defy your gender...there'll be a crowd bright n' early with mingling activities & then dancing into the night with the Club Cafe crowd! 21+/cover will be a small donation to cover expenses. Info: [madfemmepride@yahoo.com](mailto:madfemmepride@yahoo.com).

**Tuesday, December 8, 6:00-9:00 p.m.**  
**Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting.** The December board meeting is the annual meeting of the BRC. All bi and bi-friendly community members invited. We'll

**Calendar** continues on page 15



## On (Not Yet) Coming to Terms

By K.

At this point in my life, I have yet to "come out," mostly because I am not sure whether I need to come out, or what exactly it is I might need to come out about. After thinking carefully about my sexuality, I realized that many of the reasons I have not come out are related to my age, both because my age means I have not yet had a lot of experience with relationships or a lot of time to discover and reflect upon my own feelings and attractions, and because many of the social circumstances defining the time in which I am coming of age make my true feelings difficult to sort out. I have put together a list of ten reasons why I haven't come out:

1. At the age of twenty, I have only dated men, and with the exception of some adolescent experimentation, only had sexual experiences with men. I acknowledge that I have sexual attractions toward women, but I am uncertain of whether I can see myself in a relationship with a woman. I think I need more time and life experience to become more certain of my feelings.

2. Because I am still uncertain of my feelings, "coming out" seems awkward. Especially because I am in a relationship with a man, "coming out" seems like it would be a discussion of who I might date in the future—or perhaps of my sexual fantasies—which seems like a potentially uncomfortable discussion, especially to have with my parents! Also, I am afraid of having a label assigned to me by others when I am still uncertain of how I feel.

3. As a woman with a generally "straight" romantic/sexual history, I am not sure whether my attractions to women are "real," or whether they are a reaction against what

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## Meeting in the Borderlands: Transcending Boundaries 2009

By Amanda Morgan

I had the pleasure of attending the Transcending Boundaries Conference (TBC) for the first time this past November. To quote TBC's official website, the conference is for "bisexual/pansexual, trans/genderqueer, intersex and polyamorous people and our allies. TBC is for and about those who do not fit into simple categories." For me, TBC was about the rare experience of feeling at home. As a bisexual person who works in the LGBT movement, I often feel like a minority within a minority. Even though recent studies suggest there are more bi people than gay, for any so-called "proof homos bis," it rarely feels that way. Entering TBC was the first time in a long time I didn't have to continually come out as bisexual after folks assumed I was gay.

Appropriately, the first workshop I attended was on "The Stress of Hidden Bias." The facilitator, Robin Benton, outlined what she called the three types of microaggressions: microinsult, microinvalidation, microassault. As a bisexual person and a woman of color I experience all three of these on a regular basis and I wonder if many of you do as well. A microinsult can be rude behavior, insensitivity or equating bisexuality with perversion, instability or confusion. A microinvalidation can consist of excluding you, delivering a backward compliment (*You're pretty sane/monogamous for a bisexual. You're not like those other bis, etc.*) A microassault is a deliberate attempt to hurt you physically or psychologically, such as

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## My Queer & Fluid Bisexuality

By Lividia I. Violette

The realization that I liked both sexes/genders started around kindergarten. I had no idea what it was, I just knew I had a crush on most of the kids in my class, (save for the glue-eating kids). I was very fond of pretty boys and the very pretty girls. I was a shy person and never really acted on these attractions for females until much later in life. I was still confused about whether or not it was right to even feel that way. Moreover, at first I wasn't quite as attracted to the gals as I was to the guys. Girls took longer to grow on me. I certainly enjoyed a pretty face, but kissing a girl wasn't something that interested me much until my teen years.

In junior high, a friend came out to me as bisexual; that was the very first time I heard the term. In high school, I



Lividia, continues on p. 13



## HONOR ROLL

Amanda Morgan  
Celan  
Deb Morley  
Ellyn Ruthstrom  
Fennel  
Gail Zacharias  
Jen Bonardi  
Jennifer DiOrio  
Justin Adkins  
K.  
Katelynn Bishop  
Katrina Chaves  
Kim  
Kitty Constantine  
Lara Zielinsky  
Lauren Spencer  
Lavidia Violette  
Lina Judith Drake  
Linda McMahan  
Liza A.  
Robyn Ochs  
Sara de Souza  
Sarah Rowley  
Stephany Mahaffey

And others. You  
know who you are!  
Thank you.

*Bi Women* is published  
quarterly.

## STAFF

Editor:  
**Robyn Ochs**  
Assistant Editor:  
**Katrina Chaves**  
Calendar Editor:  
**Ellyn Ruthstrom**  
Proofreader:  
**Katelynn Bishop**

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ter are copyrighted by  
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## Introducing Bi Women's new Assistant Editor:



### FROM KATRINA:

The theme of this issue is "Bi Youth." As a twenty-something bisexual woman, this seems to be a fitting moment to join the *Bi Women* team.

When coming out left me feeling isolated in both gay and straight communities of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, I wanted to find spaces that were both feminist and accepting of all queer identities. For a while, I worried this would be impossible, as many straight friends suddenly became suspicious of my identity, and in the eyes of many lesbians, I was just another girl on her way to becoming gay. Luckily, *Bi Women* was one of several lifesavers I was introduced to; it served as a reassuring reminder that bisexuality was not a label to be equated with words like "crazy" or "confused." Years later, as an out-and-proud Political Science and Women's Studies major nearing graduation, I am excited to be the new Assistant Editor for a newsletter which represents and discusses bi/queer individuals in our own words. Putting the B back in LGBT is no small or simple task, which further motivates me to do my part in supporting *Bi Women*.

Related to this youth theme, we hear many vibrant voices in essays by Sara de Souza, Stephany Mahaffey, Liza A., K., Kitty Constantine, Lavidia Violette, Celan, as well as a poem by Lena Judith Drake. We learn

*Editor's Note, continues on page 5*

## Next in *Bi Women*

The theme for the next issue:

## Bodies

Let's talk about our bodies: Body image. Gendered bodies. Bodies and health. Changing bodies. Bodies converging and merging. Bodies as objects and/or subjects of attraction. Sexuality and the body. We welcome your essays, poetry, artwork, letters, and other forms of musings.

**Submissions for the next issue  
are due by May 5th.**

Send your submissions  
and suggestions  
to [biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)

Upcoming themes will include:  
Bi, But...; Fantasy; Choice;  
Out at Work; Faith & Religion;  
Intersectionality;

Send articles, calendar entries,  
letters, poems, black-and-white art,  
news, and views!

If you do not want your name published, or  
wish to use a pseudonym, please tell us.

***Bi Women* can be found online  
at [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).**

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.



# Bis Around the World: Yemisi Ilesanmi, (Abuja), Nigeria

By Robyn Ochs

*In July 2009 I attended a three-day LGBT human rights conference in Copenhagen associated with the World Out Games. There were over a thousand human rights activists present, from many countries. In an attempt by the organizers to insert some "B" into the program, I was invited to moderate a plenary panel on the second day of the conference.*

*At an earlier plenary session, several people had risen to challenge the organizers during the question period: it was unacceptable, they said, that only three of the 24 plenary speakers at the conference were transgender. The next day, during the plenary session I moderated, a woman stood up and pointed out that none of the plenary speakers was bisexual. "I am a proud bisexual woman from Nigeria," she said in a proud and powerful voice, and I was in awe of her.*

*She is an obvious choice for this column.*

**Robyn Ochs:** Yemisi, please tell us about yourself.

**Yemisi Ilesanmi:** I am a 34-year-old single parent. I grew up in Lagos, Nigeria. I am a law school graduate and work in Abuja as a full time trade unionist. I am currently in the UK studying for my postgraduate law degree in gender, sexuality and human rights. I am proudly bisexual, feminist and an atheist.

**RO:** What is your definition of bisexuality?

**YI:** I would define bisexuality as the ability to be attracted to both sexes, but then that would be putting us in a box and assuming that there are just two sexes, male and female. Naming comes with its own politics and I try as much as possible not to succumb to politics of naming and pegging people



down based on stereotyped definitions. That said, I would say bisexuality to me is what I call genderless attraction – the ability to be attracted to a person regardless of his/her gender.

**RO:** How did you come to identify as bi? How old were you?

**YI:** I did not put a name on my sexual preference or my lack of one (laughs) until much later. I have always been attracted to the same sex and the opposite sex but I had always tried to deny that part of me and nurture the heterosexual part, since that was what society promoted and accepted as normal. I was quite young when I had my first same-sex attraction – it hit me like a tsunami wave and I was quite shocked by it. I could not put a name on it, or discuss it with anyone. At that age in my society, I was not expected to be discussing any sort of sexual attraction! With time and enlightenment, I realized I do not have to deny who I am and there really is nothing to be ashamed of. To the contrary, I see it as a step above the accepted heterosexuality because my feelings or attractions for someone are not based on gender but on the person. It does not matter whether you are man or woman or transgender, it's the person inside that I am attracted to and for me attraction comes in different shapes and sizes. After all, variety really is the spice of life!

**RO:** You mentioned that you identify as atheist. Were you raised in a religious family, and if so, what impact did this have on your coming out?

**YI:** I was raised in a very religious Christian family, and I started studying religious books at an early age. As a voracious reader with inquisitive mind, I realized quite young that the portrayal of God in the holy books as a war-hungry, bloodthirsty fiend, keen on revenge for a particular race, certainly did not go down well with my picture of a omnipotent, omniscient omni-benevolent, all-loving god. It didn't take me long to discover the word atheism and I heaved a sigh of relief that there are some out there who prefer logic to superstitions and fantasies. Being an atheist has made me a better person. I appreciate people for what they are, accept responsibility for my actions or inactions, give myself a pat on the back for achievements and chastise myself for disappointments. Pleasures and pains are life's twin fountains. Atheism is about embracing reality no matter how difficult it is to accept and that has helped me to accept my sexual orientation because I would rather be true to myself in all aspects of my life. My bisexuality is part of me. I have learned to embrace it to get the best possible me. Admitting to being an atheist *and* a bisexual is more likely to attract an horrified glare, but I know that I do not need to be religious to be moral, loving and caring, and neither do I need to be heterosexual before I can experience real love and sexual satisfaction. I am comfortable in my skin.

**RO:** You are quite an outspoken woman. When you stood up at the plenary that I was moderating and challenged the organizers about the total absence of bisexual plenary

*Yemisi, continues on next page*



*Yemisi, continued from p. 3*

speakers, I was very impressed by your eloquence and your passion. How did you first get involved in activism?

**YI:** It was the mid-90s and the military regime was in power. Like every other sector in Nigeria, the educational system was badly hit and the student unions became a driving force for the call for a democratic government. I was a student union leader and many of us got suspended from school, arrested and detained so many times for protesting against the military regimes and their puppets in power in the educational sector. I was involved in human rights activism as well as gender issues. I founded the National Association of Nigerian Female Students to challenge our marginalization and to encourage female students to actively participate in student unionism and issues of governance. It was from student activism that I started working with other progressive organizations in the country like human rights organizations and the labor movement. I started working full time for the Nigeria Labor Congress in 2002.

**RO:** Please tell us about the LGBT movement in Nigeria.

**YI:** The LGBT movement in Nigeria is still in its infancy. In fact, it was more of an underground thing before the attempt to introduce the hopefully doomed anti-same-sex bill that sought to further criminalize same-sex relationships. Nigeria is one of the commonwealth countries still stuck with the colonial legacy of sodomy laws. Rather than repeal this outrageous and degrading law, Nigeria is seeking to further criminalize same-sex relationships. This has actually brought the LGBT movements and other human rights organizations in Nigeria together. LGBT organizations are still in early stages of development. Hopefully they will get stronger and be able to exist without fear of criminalization. The main problem is that an LGBT organization cannot be officially recognized as such because of the sodomy laws, since same-sex relationships are considered criminal offenses. We must continue to fight for the decriminalization of same-sex relationships everywhere.

**RO:** What is it like to be a bi-identified woman in Nigeria? Do you know many others? Are there other bi people involved in the LGBT rights movement in your country? Do you feel fully accepted by your fellow activists?

**YI:** If you choose to be open and honest about your sexual orientation in Nigeria, life can be difficult, but if you choose to be hypocritical about it or live in denial, life might be tolerable – it depends on what makes life worth living for you. Hypocrisy seems to thrive in a society like Nigeria and many are just happy for you to lie and deny something so central to your being just to be accepted. I do know many bisexuals, lesbians and gay men in Nigeria; some acknowledge this only to a select few while many are in constant denial. Remember that same-sex relationships

are considered criminal offenses in Nigeria. People cannot truly be who they are without fear of repercussions. Even though I work in a progressive organization with trade unionists and human rights activists, I cannot deceive myself and say I am totally accepted by my fellow activists. I am used to snide remarks. Many follow the “don’t ask, don’t tell” attitude. Colleagues would rather refer to my same-sex partner as my friend rather than a lover or partner and I find that annoying. I am a very out person in my workplace and in my social life generally, and I treat any snide remark as an opportunity to address the ignorance of the person making it.

**RO:** In your lifetime, what changes have you seen in Nigeria for LGBT people?

**YI:** I am happy that many are coming out to identify with the cause; I do hope that discrimination based on sexual orientation will be a thing of the past and the pending bill in the National Assembly will be voted down by right-thinking people who value democracy and human rights for all.

**RO:** As a “proud bisexual woman,” how do people respond to you? Do you have any interesting stories to share?

**YI:** I do not allow people to get under my skin or affect me with their ignorance. When you are in a same-sex relationship people do not want to accept that you are in a real relationship, they would rather refer to your partner as your friend rather than lover. Coming from a particularly bad same-sex break up, I was told that I can’t be heartbroken because a girl can’t break a girl’s heart! Finding support can be difficult in a homophobic society. Many same-sex breakups can be blamed on the unhealthy, ridiculous demands of the society wanting you to compromise, dictate to you how to live your life in order to be accepted and considered as normal. It is indeed a sick society that needs to be healed.

**RO:** You have travelled quite extensively. What contacts do you have with LGBT activists in other countries? Does your knowledge of or contacts with bi or LGBT activism in other countries influence your activism here? Do you see a value in transnational activism?

**YI:** Yes, I do see a value in transnational activism. As a trade unionist, workers of the world have always seen the sense in uniting globally to fight for better working conditions. And LGBT issues are workers’ issues – there is a need to make sure that workplace discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation is not tolerated anywhere in the world. Trade unions, especially from Third World countries in Africa and Asia, must see this as a key workers’ issue. An

*Yemisi, continues on page 17*



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about the new biyouth.org website, and Lara Zielinsky reviews Map, a coming of age (and out) memoir by Audrey Beth Stein and interviews the author. Jennifer DiOrio discusses her new coming-of-age play, "OFFSIDES."

Also in this issue, Amanda Morgan offers her perspectives on 2009's Transcending Boundaries Conference. Lauren Spencer discusses Creating Change 2010 and Amanda Morgan adds commentary about the first-ever day-long Bi Institute held at this conference. Our "Bis Around the World" feature takes us to Nigeria, our "Bi of the Month" is Bisexual Resource Center President and former *Bi Women* editor Ellyn Ruthstrom, Kim shares a poem and, as always, we offer our calendar of fun-filled events in and around Boston.

And, bi the way, please consider writing something for the next issue! The theme is "Bodies." And we want to hear from you!

Warmly,  
Katrina Chaves



BBWN's Valentine's Day Brunch at Jen's

## HELP WANTED

*BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Rather than 2 or 3 women doing 100 hours of work, our goal is to have 100 women doing 2 or 3 hours each. Below is a list of volunteer opportunities. If there is a project that interests you, please contact Robyn (biwomeneditor@gmail.com) for more information.*

### Host a brunch

BBWN potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area. We try to hold a brunch in a member's home each month so that people can relax and share food and experiences in a safe space. Let us know if you are interested in hosting a brunch.

### Be Our Brunch Diva

Take responsibility for scheduling and serving as point person for our monthly potluck brunches. We schedule brunches 3 months in advance, and we already have brunches lined up through June. This is a very easy -- but important! -- job.

### Be Our Mailing Diva

Take responsibility for scheduling and coordinating our quarterly newsletter stuffings.

### Pre-Pride Brunch

Most years, BBWN hosts a brunch on the morning of Boston's LGBT Pride Day (June 12th, this year). We're looking for a woman or three to coordinate this event.

### Do You Know Web Design?

We're looking for someone to maintain biwomenboston.org, our new website, which uses WordPress. It's the perfect volunteer job, as you can do it from home, in your pajamas, or even in your birthday suit.

### Are You Looking for an Internship?

Are you a student looking for an internship during the school year or next summer? BBWN and the Bisexual Resource Center may have something for you! Contact president@biresource.net.

### And finally (this will be fun!):

Next year is the BRC's 25th anniversary and we're gearing up to build a killer float for 2010's Boston Pride Parade in honor of this auspicious milestone. If you're interested in being a part of the float committee, or if you have an idea for a float concept, please contact Carla at carla@imperial-jewett.com. We will be holding several planning sessions starting in December or January.



# The Road Less Travelled

By Sara de Souza

During the Fall of Grade 10 at my "all-girls' school," I recall developing a crush on someone who at first glance I thought was a boy. I believed my feelings were irrational and tried to push them out of my mind. But they wouldn't go away. A year went by and I asked a very close friend if I could try kissing her. To my surprise she accepted and a mutual friend photographed our simulated kiss. Unfortunately, thanks to photo index on the disposable camera I had, the girls at school also found out about the infamous "kiss." I found myself suddenly enmeshed in gossip and glares from girls I rarely spoke to, and soon-to-be ex-friends. I came out almost a year later, before the summer I left for university. I recall one experience with a friend during our commute to Toronto. I blurted out to her on the subway, "Oh, by the way, I'm not straight...I'm bisexual." She told me I couldn't just throw something like that out there, and kept quiet. Our outing seemed to progress normally until we parted, but we never spoke again. I tried to chalk up her rejection to how close-minded institutional religion had made her. But really, we went to the same high school and I had friends who identified as Catholic and still accepted me. The experience just taught me that not everyone will accept you for who you are, and you just have to live with that, despite how hurtful it may be. During my first year at McMaster University I was able to "make up" for the missed prom and attended our LGBTQ Centre's annual formal, where I was met with one of the biggest surprises of my life! At McMaster, I had garnered somewhat of a reputation for being an activist engaged in feminist movement and LGBTQ organizing on campus. Several of my residence hall friends naturally assumed that my participation in the formal was evidence of my activist identity and not my newfound bisexuality. While at the formal, themed "Fairy Masquerade," four of my friends randomly decided it would be a good idea to get dressed up and come surprise me. I had no clue they would do

this, even though they all helped me get ready pre-event. I was so happy and felt so loved. I thanked them for coming and couldn't stop telling everyone how happy I was! This was definitely one of the highlights of my coming out experience. Today, four years later, I still identify as bisexual. Yet, my understanding of who I'm attracted to is continually evolving. After attending my first bisexual support group, The B-Side at the Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto, I came to understand that my sexuality is more fluid and that I am more pansexual in terms of whom I find myself attracted to. For the first time, I found I was part of creating a bi community, something I had never experienced prior. After meeting one transwoman, I picked up a copy of Julia Serano's, *The Whipping Girl*, and it honestly changed my life to recognize that the relationship between being bisexual and wanting to explore my own understanding of gender is something other people could relate to. Throughout the years that I have identified as bisexual, I have been met with varied degrees of acceptance from friends, family and strangers. Yet, I remain true to my beliefs. There are times that I want to believe that I am a lesbian, but then I realize that I have to separate stereotypes from reality, including those that made me believe that my lack of having a partner of an expected gender somehow made me unworthy of love. I know that I will one day find a partner who I can love, and their gender won't be of consequence to me. I know that my sexuality has been shaped by both positive and negative experiences and it has made me into a more empathetic being who welcomes fluidity and gender diversity. If nothing else, I try to help create space for people to just be themselves in all their beauty. I just wish that I were a better friend to myself sometimes! Lastly, as a bisexual feminist who also is learning to manage her anxiety, finding helpful mental health services

has improved my confidence in navigating my relationships. I have seen three therapists in my life and never has my sexuality come up until the last therapist. I didn't speak about it because I felt I would be rejected and that it just wasn't "relevant." This attitude is something I believe a lot of bisexual youth also have in common with me. They believe that somehow their sexuality doesn't "fit" into therapy, or they don't know how it does. This is why having a supportive therapist is essential. I managed to find one through a local clinic which specializes in anxiety disorders. I encourage anyone reading this to also check out their local clinics and "interview" therapists on their opinions around sexuality. This is what I did and it really made all the difference. Although you can never tell whether someone is harboring implicit biases you can try to get a sense of where they stand on the issue of bisexuality. One quality that makes me proud to be bisexual would have to be my acceptance of gender diversity amongst people. For me being bi and queer enables me to appreciate unique gender qualities and trans/queer gender identities. I have recognized that the people that I am the most connected to also appreciate my queer gender identity and love me for it.

I believe that through my intersecting identities, mainly as a racialized woman of South Asian heritage as well as a bisexual woman, my siblings can learn through my history of coming out. I want to teach my younger siblings (who are 11 and 10 years old) how important it is to be true to oneself while simultaneously being the "safe space" which enables others to do the same!

*Sara is a 24-year-old queer feminist from Toronto, Ontario who actively participates in her local anti-violence movement.*



# Coming Out in My Twenties

By Stephany Mahaffey

I am from Miami, Florida, a place known for its openness to sexual diversity. I was in ninth grade when a friend who was sleeping over asked me if I wanted to "fool around." I froze up. I told her I was straight. She shrugged her shoulders, rolled over, and went to sleep. I couldn't sleep. I laid there hoping she wasn't asleep. Hoping she would ask again. Or, hoping that each unintentional contact we made was intentional. It was a long night. There were no Gay/Straight Alliances in my high school and I wasn't comfortable talking about my feelings with anyone. It was not until college that I would have another opportunity to explore this part of my identity.

At 21 years old, I thought I had it all figured out. And then I moved to Texas. I unintentionally went running back to the closet and only frequented the "gayborhood" in Dallas with my gay male friends. They would constantly tell me that I was a lesbian and I should just come out. But that wasn't it at all. Within four years, I had completely lost my connection with "the other side" of my sexuality. I enrolled in a graduate program at Texas Woman's University and my world was reopened by the department's commitment to diversity of all types. It was here that I truly had an identity crisis. I was 25 years old and didn't know "what" I was. On one hand, I had a close bisexual female friend who encouraged me to wear a visible bisexual identity. She felt this was important politically. On the other hand, I had another close bisexual female friend who was in a relationship with a man. She didn't wear her identity visibly and told me to do what I wanted. The problem was, I didn't know what I wanted.

On a trip to San Francisco for a convention, my two worlds collided and so did my identities. One of my best gay male friends was living in San Francisco and he offered to take a few of us out with his friends on our first night. The first thing he said to me

when we got out of the taxi was, "So, are you still bisexual?" I screamed in delight and made him repeat himself to my Texas friends. It was validated, I was bisexual. It wasn't just a dream or delusion. The following day, I was processing my identity crisis with a female friend at the convention who, I thought, identified as a lesbian. She looked at me and clearly spoke, "Well, I think the reason you are confused is because people see you with a boyfriend and they assume you are straight. They call you straight. You don't correct them and a part of you gets lost." She wasn't trying to be condescending, as she is a few years older than I am. She revealed that she identified as a bisexual too. I hit the floor. I knew this woman and her partner for years and I had no idea. She said that she never actually identifies herself as a lesbian. People see her with her partner and they just assume she is a lesbian. Just like I did. It was this conversation that opened me up to being more open with my sexual identity to others.

I tested the waters with friends and acquaintances. I told my story with a group of friends at dinner one night and a friend came to me after to say how powerful it had been for her to hear my story. She said she was glad to hear that she wasn't the "only one." After I realized I could help other people figure out their own sexualities, I started opening up to everyone. My parents, my colleagues at school and at work, and anyone else who is eager to listen. Being open to my family and friends has been the most liberating part of my elongated coming out experience. I don't think I was ready at 21 years old to open up to the whole world. I needed to know that there were other people out there like me, and different than me, who were also bisexual. It was also healing to know that they also struggled with their own identity.

I still have moments of panic when I feel my identity is challenged.

For example, filling out a survey for bisexual research there was part where it asked to identify your longest same-sex relationship. I started to freak out. I hadn't ever had an extensive relationship with a woman. Does that mean that I am not bisexual? It took processing with friends and allies to remember that my identity is just that... it is mine. Mine, mine, mine!

My advice for young bisexual women would be to accept yourself as you are, wherever and whoever that is. Talk to people in the community who are open to helping you figure things out. In my experience, everyone was open to helping because they had all experienced some level of confusion in their identity or loved someone who has. It has also been helpful for me to read books about bisexuals' life experiences. I have many "Aha" moments while reading about other bisexual persons' experiences. "Aha! That is exactly how I felt laying in bed that night." "Aha! This woman has had the same struggles that I have had!" I am relieved to know that a lot of people's sexuality is fluid and that doesn't make me crazy. That just makes me cool.

*Stephany, 28, is a graduate student at Texas Woman's University. She hopes that her story will be helpful to others.*



# Leaving the Bubble: Coming Out All Over Again in College

By Liza A.

Sometime between my freshman and junior years of high school, almost all of my close friends came out as bi, trans, gay, or lesbian. Our few straight friends watched in disbelief as we came out one by one, wondering how we had all ended up in the same social group. We laughed and joked that "all our friends are gay," but I know many of us appreciated having a safe environment where we could talk openly about both girls and boys, as well as issues like coming out and discrimination. My friends understood me, and we became each other's support group.

When we graduated last June, our bubble popped. Luckily, I ended up at a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania where the phrase "don't be so heteronormative" is tossed around so often that it almost sounds cliché. I promised myself that I wouldn't hide my sexuality in college, yet it was kind of a shock for me all of a sudden to be surrounded by so many straight people, away from my safety net of understanding friends. I realized that entering a completely new community automatically put me back in the closet, so I found myself pretending to be straight, just because it was so much easier than having to come out to different people over and over again. I awkwardly avoided the topic of dating, and when asked what TV shows I watched, I deliberately omitted two of my favorites: *The L Word* and *South of Nowhere*.

It didn't help that a few weeks into classes, we had an event called "Screw Your Roommate," where freshmen set their roommates or suitemates up on a blind date. No one ever asked me if I might want to be set up with a girl. The assumption was just made that everyone wanted to be set up with someone of the opposite gender, leaving LGBT students to bring up the issue themselves, or if they weren't comfortable coming out

yet, to remain silent and accept their match. I didn't say anything, and since I like both boys and girls, it was fine with me when I got set up with a guy on the rugby team.

The guilt of pretending I was straight ate at me constantly. One night I was talking to some friends, and I accidentally referenced *The L Word* in conversation. Realizing what I'd said, I rushed to add that I'd only seen it because I had a friend who's a lesbian. I mentally beat myself up about making the excuse, telling myself that I was being ridiculous and had no reason to keep hiding, especially after I'd promised myself that I would do just the opposite in college. I couldn't sleep that night. After tossing and turning, I got out of bed and drafted a private note on Facebook to all of my closest friends at school, explaining that I was bi and that I felt silly for making it seem otherwise. Although it was tempting to put off sending the note, I knew it was now or never. I pressed send.

I got back into bed anxious and shaking, but I also felt relieved. Over the next few days I received quite a few responses. Each one was positive, letting me know that people really respected me for what I did, and that they were glad I felt comfortable sharing with them. I started attending meetings of my college's Sexuality and Gender Alliance as well as the Queer Discussion Group, and I feel that I'm in a good place now in terms of being out to friends and having resources for support. At the same time though, I know that I'll have to keep going through similar processes in the future, coming out to new people as I enter new communities and make new friends going forward.

*Liza is a college freshman who loves music, photography, traveling, and hanging out with friends.*

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## What we saw

By Kim

I can taste the blonde in her hair  
speak orange to the warning of her lips  
smell yellow from her environment  
she didn't notice me listening to the red around her heart  
But I saw the halo of purple all around us  
her feet shifted with the quickness of white  
and I felt the brown in her touch  
though metaphorically speaking, she may have meant to make me feel pink  
The blue crept into her eyes  
and I tried to return a matching red but only green emerged  
she could tell I was struggling  
so we both opted for black

*Kim, a.k.a. The B word Poet is a 29-year-old bisexual writer and activist in Cleveland, Ohio.  
([www.shewrites.com/profile/TheBWordPoet](http://www.shewrites.com/profile/TheBWordPoet))*





## The New Bi Youth Website at biyouth.org

By Robyn Ochs

"Are there any resources out there specifically for bisexual youth?" This is the most common question I am asked as a speaker. And until very recently, the answer was "No." There are a number of resources for LGBT youth on the web, but few resources focus specifically on bi-identified youth. So this past summer, with the help of a number of volunteers, I created a website for bi, fluid and questioning youth. The website is a project of the Bisexual Resource Center, and can be found at biyouth.org. This site is a work in progress, and it is our hope that bi youth themselves will provide its direction and focus. Please take a look, and let us know what you think. Whatever your age – and especially if you are a youth – your feedback is welcome.



Below are a few words of wisdom from bi youth that are already posted on the site:

**Ashleigh, age 15:** Be who you are! Embrace your true self. Even when/if people put you down, they only do so because they don't understand. (Generally, hate is ignorance.) So stand up tall, and believe in yourself. It can be hard, but in the end it will be worth it because in some way your interactions with others will have changed their perspective.

**Kitty, age 22:** There's nothing wrong with you. You don't have to choose one side, straight or gay. Bi isn't a phase and you're attracted to whomever you're attracted to, there's no changing that.

**Ellie, age 20:** Remember that your sexuality is more fluid than society would lead you to think. Just as it can be hard for a person raised in a hetero-normative culture to acknowledge same-sex attractions, it can also be hard for a queer-identified person to acknowledge opposite-sex attractions. Don't let anyone, including yourself, force you into a box or deny the validity of your feelings. Being queer doesn't mean being gay 100% of the time. It's about the identity you choose, the community you have, and how you see the world.

**Casey, age 19:** There's nothing wrong with you. Your sexuality is fluid. However long or short a time it takes to get there, embrace the path to finding just who you are and the perfect way to identify and express yourself as such. Be safe, be true to yourself, live and love with all your heart.

## Skipping the Cookie Cutter

By Kitty Constantine

My name is Kitty Constantine. I'm 21 and have identified as bisexual since I was 19 years old. I learned about bisexuality in my acquisition of general knowledge of sexual orientations in the world. High school was a place where you were expected to be straight. Homosexuality was a joke, so one could not even think about being bi. In time, there were two boys who came out about their sexuality, but no girl at that high school has ever admitted to being anything other than straight. Having a strong religious background in the Christian religion of Pentecostalism, I believed homosexuality was "sinful" but I held the chauvinist view that if it would please my "husband," I would consent to participating in sex with another woman. It was only meeting my boyfriend, who also identified as bisexual, that I gained the courage to explore the homosexual side of my sexuality. It's only been in the alternative lifestyle communities, with the friends I've made there, that I have found true acceptance. I am not open about my sexuality with the community and the people I grew up with. My family is aware of my other alternative inclinations as a BDSM slave, but it would break their religious hearts to learn I was bisexual. If I was ever confronted outright about my sexuality, I would not deny being bisexual, but I will not throw it in their faces and purposely seek to create conflict. I know who I am and what I want from life. Nothing can take that assurance from me. My role models are people who fight for my right to freely express the homosexual side of my sexuality. My role models are the ones who are educators on how we achieved the freedoms we have today. It still amazes me how many people do not know about the Stonewall Riots. My support comes from the BDSM and Leather communities I involve myself in. By getting involved with people like myself, I have been learning and growing in my lifestyle so I can support and educate others. To those who are still considering and exploring their sexuality, don't be so quick to adopt labels. Don't worry if your experience is not a cookie cutter mold of what you expect the idea of "sexuality" to be. Be honest with yourself about what you desire. If you deny yourself pleasure and try to conform to other peoples' expectations, you'll never know anything more than the pain of never knowing what happiness you could have had.

*Kitty is a student with a focus in Psychology and Creative Writing, who lives and studies on the East Coast with her wonderful queer roommate and her two cats.*



# inside, a few inches

By Lena Judith Drake

I

a naked man is a very frightening thing,  
my mother says, and as for the videos,  
i remember the thick black pubic hair  
where a baby's head, barely visible,  
pried through;

a boy, voice squeaking, sneaking  
out of his bedroom at night with piles of white sheets,  
his big brother or father or uncle or the narrator of the  
video  
a paid actor, and not very good,  
stopping him and explaining ejaculation, nocturnally,

but we don't know semen is white. the boy said alien  
blood,  
and blood is red, isn't it? or, alien,  
green? maybe?  
and does our blood, girl blood, pour out of us?  
how much?

II

when i am 12, cybersex is the new thing, and when i am  
12 and a half,  
i lose my online virginity,  
at my parents' computer in the kitchen.  
i say i am 17, in biology in a high school,  
and that seems so the thing to say.  
he is 16. i am the older woman.

we are writers, so we battle a sorcerer in an igloo in the  
winter,  
and then i wear white furs, wait for him on a bed.  
we have ambiguous romance novel sex, free of "cunt"s,  
and full of "inside"s.  
we may have even married. pretty good prose  
for a first time. he is probably really 16.

in the instant message box, asterisks decorating my fake  
name,  
he asks me to be his girlfriend, then calls me a bitch.  
i uninstall AIM quietly, while my parents make  
sandwiches.  
i think he will find me; i go to the bathroom and cry.

III

first period: science class with the stoned teacher

we stand waiting in bunches and lines at the door.  
i go to look, my panties coated, brown sludge.

i stare down at my underwear in disbelief  
in the handicapped stall of the bathroom, like i am in  
kindergarten again  
playing with toys for too long and accidents and hiding  
my tights.  
and then i think, oh blood. brown blood.

there is a girl, poised, with beautiful hair, whose parents  
vote conservative,  
and she has pads in the back pocket of her denim purse.  
she gives me one. i go to dance class later,  
roll around on the floor, feeling like i have a mattress  
between my legs,  
like i have blood spotting my stretch pants.

IV

the first first time: every image is soft, the yellowed lace  
and lavender  
in her bedroom, 15-year-old love notes with inkwell pens,  
and her kissing me fiercely,  
closed mouths until we try tongue, every image soft until

i pretend not to be wet, grab toilet paper from the  
bathroom  
to wipe it up before it goes through my jeans and she  
knows that i want her.  
even though she probably knows already,  
even though i run my fingers on her spine and lower,  
and leave with lips more chapped  
than when i got there.  
but always with clothes. i still have to hide it.  
i am young.

she is a cutter, but i tell her i will never leave her, forever,  
ever, ever.  
i go into the bathroom, shake, gag, wipe more from  
myself, then come back.  
should we take off our shirts? i ask.  
yes. it's so soon, she says.  
6 months is not very soon, i think, but i don't say it.  
areolae pale pink. should we take off our pants, too? i ask.

V

the other first time: i come because i think he's going to  
come,  
humping through pajama pants,  
but with everything else, i'm strangely disconnected. a  
witness.

*inside, continued on next page*



inside, continued from previous page

i am seeing a naked man, curled at the end of the bed.  
it is not very frightening.

the moment the tip is inside me (his cock, my cunt,  
let's not  
make this another romance novel)  
i think to myself, i am not a virgin.  
and also it only hurts a little.  
and also this meijer lube sucks. profoundly, i note  
it's not very profound.

VI

two fingers all of a sudden, not one at a time,  
even boys sometimes know one at a time,  
she tells me i have cysts,  
and also that i should stop having sex until it's with  
someone special.

my mother asks later if the speculum was too big,  
since i'm a virgin, for jesus, for marriage.

the gynecologist is right, at least, about the cysts.  
the day before thanksgiving, two hour cramps stab-  
shuttling to my brain,  
i puke up something orange in the wicker wastebasket,  
and it makes my tooth enamel squeaky.  
the clot-rope sludging out of my cunt,  
the trickles of blood sliding down like firemen  
all dressed in bright red, palms to the pole, uterus  
clenching.

VII

it's comforting,  
coming from missionary, or with his thumb while i'm  
on top,  
socks still on, a bag of jalapeno chips by the bed where  
we plant our tissues  
after we blow our noses.  
we talk statistical illiteracy,  
while he re-names both of my breasts, with permission.  
i am saying things i haven't said in a long time,  
things like "in love", except i don't shake as much, or  
at all.

my legs are unshaved and scabless  
when the planned parenthood nurse practitioner  
tells me my vulva is beautiful, but my cervix  
is gorgeous.  
the pills are small enough to slip through my teeth,  
but i haven't forgotten any yet.

i soak in cold, wash in warm, when the blood comes  
out of me.  
my fingers are telling you this story, because they've  
touched,  
because they know.

*Lena is a 20-year-old bisexual woman.*

Be confident in **yourself**,  
**YOU** are the only one who knows  
your own **true** sexuality.

- Jarrett, 18

- ➡ Are you a young person with questions about bisexuality or queer sexuality?
- ➡ Want to know more about coming out?
- ➡ What are the resources for queer youth?

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Bisexual Resource Center

Find the answers to these  
questions and more at  
**BiYouth.org!**

**BiYouth.org**



## OFFSIDES, a new play

Robyn Ochs has commented on the woeful shortage of media that deal respectfully with bisexual characters. Her comment got me thinking about my own script and its writing process.

I am currently adapting OFFSIDES, my fictional screenplay, for the stage. This teen drama includes a bisexual main character. Originally, the screenplay had two main characters, one bicurious and the other lesbian. However, the structure of the stage adaptation improved with the inclusion of a lone main character. Not surprisingly, writing about one bisexual character was easier, since such an individual reflects my own bisexual experience. I also found myself changing the focus of the story in general. Originally, the lesbian character "comes out" to her mother. Instead of a coming out story, the adaptation of OFFSIDES is a universal coming-of-age story about Marissa, a star soccer player from a financially-strapped family who makes an unfortunate decision and has to pay the consequences, learning and growing all the while. Although Marissa is bisexual, I do not draw attention to her process. Her bisexuality is no big deal.

More than anything, my main goal was to create a story with which almost anyone could identify. I wanted OFFSIDES to offer insights on complicated human experience.

A local stage director in New Jersey is slated to produce OFFSIDES sometime in the Fall of 2010. More information will follow.

-Jennifer DiOrio, emerging playwright/screenwriter

*K., continued from page 1*

has bothered me in relationships with men. I am especially turned off by men who seem to put up a front in order to display a certain type of masculinity. I feel I am more attracted to femininity, but I am uncertain of whether I am attracted to femininity in male-bodied people, female-bodied people, or both.

4. I can't help but notice in my relationships with men how much their ideas of sex have been influenced by a particular type of pornography. I have expressed to partners my frustration that it seems a sexual encounter isn't considered "sex" unless it culminates with a man putting his dick in my vagina, and I often feel that they just humor me with a little more of this or that, but are not open to a different kind of sexual experience. I also find the female body very beautiful, and I am curious about what sex would be like without dick involved, but I am uncertain of whether this is simply curiosity/fantasy, or part of a "true" sexual identity.

5. I am also uncertain of whether my attractions to women result from the over-sexualization of the female body in our culture. If so, I am not sure whether

it is "just a fantasy," or whether I could be in a relationship with a woman.

6. I sometimes feel like I can't own the word "bi" or "queer" because I look so *straight*! I also feel nervous about approaching a woman I'm attracted to because I know I am very normative in my gender presentation, and I'm just not sure if queer women would be interested in me.

7. Although I sometimes want to believe I am beyond such concerns, I know that part of me fears the reactions I will encounter from others if I am to acknowledge my attractions to women or come out as bisexual or queer, especially from certain family members.

8. I also know that I am not immune to internalizing biphobia or homophobia, and although I am very accepting of others' various sexual identities, I know that a part of me isn't ready to accept a queer identity as my own.

9. If I were to come out, or adopt a label for my sexuality, I am uncertain of what label would fit me. I find myself very attracted to many genderqueer people, and although I know the word "bisexual" need not imply that I limit my attractions to two genders, I think I would be more comfortable using

a label that reflects my attraction to gender expression that goes beyond the binary... But I am not sure what that word is.

10. At this point in my life, I am content not to pick a label, because I want to be open to discovering my potential to be attracted to different people.

In closing, I know that many of the reasons I have not come out relate to the fact that I am just not sure what to come out "as"! However, I realize that by not coming out at all, I am assumed to be straight, and politically I find this problematic. I hope, then, to keep reflecting on and realizing my attractions because I want to come out as *something* at some point. In the meantime, I have to say that I feel so very welcome in the bi community, despite the fact that I do not (yet?) identify as bisexual, so I would like to thank everyone who has made this community a place where what you call yourself is not nearly as important as what it is you believe in!

*K. is currently studying Sociology. She spends a lot of time thinking about gender and sexuality in the (overlapping) contexts of her personal life and academic work.*



**Lividia**, continued from page 1

learned of a few other bisexuals, mostly girls. When our discussion meandered to sexuality in my senior English class, one girl came out of the closet. I can't recall her real name, but friends called her "Twitch." Our teacher, (one of my favorites) however, thought that bisexuals were just *greedy*. He said there was no such thing as a "*true*" bisexual. I never stood up to correct my teacher or defend Twitch. I regret that I allowed my timidity to silence me. I didn't know at the time that he was expressing bi erasure and biphobia. There was no GSA in my high school to consult about the matter. I didn't even hear the term "Gay/Straight Alliance" until long after high school.

By graduation, I was still attracted to guys, although not as strongly. To me, the less masculine a guy was the better. I think this was really the beginning of my fondness for men with androgynous and feminine appeal. My interest in women slowly but steadily increased, yet a better understanding of my sexuality did not really sink in until I was about 20. After this major epiphany, the first thing I did was search the local bookstore. I had to find out more about bisexuality. I had to know how many others like me were out there and how they might be found. At this time, I was aware of only a handful of other bisexuals in my city of Arlington, Texas. At the bookstore, I found one copy of *Bi Any Other Name*, edited by Lani Kaahumanu and Loraine Hutchins, and devoured it. I learned so much from everyone's different perspective and I wanted to learn more. Next, I ordered *The Bisexual Option* by Fritz Klein and after that, the humorous *Bisexual's Guide to the Universe* by Nicole Kristal and Mike Szymanski. I read *Look Both Ways* by Jennifer Baumgardner during breaks at work. A few years later, I obtained my newest treasure: *Getting Bi*, edited by Robyn Ochs and Sarah E. Rowley. Robyn gave me her copy herself when she came to Dallas.

Two years after reading and re-reading it, I gave my precious copy of *Bi Any Other Name* to my friend, Shelley (also an LGBT activist) who said that she might be bi. She loved it and told me that she is now certain she's bisexual.

At age 22, I came out to my then best friend. She comically jumped back as if to protect herself, before folding her arms and saying, "Okay, so?" It was good to know that it wasn't a big deal to her. She reminded me that she herself had mentioned long before I came out that she wouldn't be completely adverse to dating women, and pointing out that she thought some women were "hot sauce." She, aged 20, was more like a Kinsey 1 1/2. At 22, I lingered at Kinsey 3 for a while. I was still attracted to men, though I was very particular in their qualities: no chest or facial hair, not too tall or too muscular. I was really into the skinny men with long hair. I loved the glamorous women: lipstick, pretty hair, boobs, skirts, high heels and all. So far, every friend that I've come out to has been very accepting, even my very conservative new best friend. Since moving to Dallas, I've made many more out friends within the LGBT community, and have experienced little discrimination within it.

When it comes to my family, I've always been very private; growing up in a full household any amount of privacy was sacred. To this day, I have yet to introduce anyone I am dating to my family, male or female. The few relatives that I did come out to were accepting and non-judgmental. I have a gay cousin who came out before I did, so I think that may have eased whatever tension there might have been. At my current job, I'm out at work. It is very easy to be. Almost everyone is an LGBT person or LGBT-friendly. It's a very diverse company. People come from different backgrounds and cultures, covered in tattoos or piercings, blue hair and funky clothing; no one judges you based on what you look like or whom you love. Having a manager who is openly and proudly gay also helped me feel more comfortable about being out at work. Never before have I been free to be me at work.

I'm twenty-four now and more comfortable in my own skin than I've ever been. I think as far as my attractions go, they may change and evolve, but I'm certain that I'll always be attracted to more than one sex/

gender. Right now, I would say that I'm more of a Kinsey 3.5 to 4, but when I take into account the Klein Grid, it gets much more complicated. I find it easier to form friendships and emotional relationships with men. I'm less and less attracted to masculinity, physically or otherwise. I'm more attracted to the soft-butth women and femme, but not too lipstick, women. I'm still into men that physically remind me of women and I am really into the androgynous look. I can't really look at the grid and say what my "ideal" orientation is; for me, it's whatever I'm identifying myself as at the time.

As far as role models go, Robyn Ochs is a bisexual icon of mine whom I had the pleasure of meeting during her visit to Dallas. I look up to all those who promote visibility for the bi/pan/fluid community, as well as those who fight for equality for all. I am a member of the Dallas-Fort Worth Bisexual Network, but I have not gone there for support. I really haven't thought about seeking support for myself—I am too busy lending support to others! I also admire some of the bi and queer-identified friends that I work with in my community: Latisha McDaniel, D.J. Anderson and Andi Reis.

The best advice I have for other young people who are questioning or bi/pan/fluid would be this: Come out, come out, wherever you are! Read bi and LGBT literature, be proud to wave the bi flag or wear bi colors during Pride week and parades to promote visibility. Join or organize a GSA if you're in school, or find or create a support group. Go out there and find local activists and organizations that are pro-bi and pro-LGBT causes; just get *involved* in the bi and BLGT community! Learn as much as you can and teach others what you know. Make use of the many resources that are out there. Education is a key factor in breaking down the barriers of ignorance and intolerance we still face today.

*Lividia is a 24-year-old activist from Arlington, Texas who rocks the mission of equality.*



## Bi of the Month: An Interview with Ellyn Ruthstrom

By Deb Morley

*I met Ellyn eight years ago at a BBWN brunch that I attended when I first moved to the Boston area. I have found her to be a great inspiration in the various ways she connects with and builds queer community. It's both an honor and a pleasure to interview my first Boston friend for this issue of Bi Women.*

**Deb:** What does the word "bisexual" mean to you, and how does it apply to your life?

**Ellyn:** To me, being bisexual means having a sexuality that isn't limited by the sex or gender of the people you are attracted to. You just recognize that you can be attracted to a person for very individual reasons. I became aware of my capacity to be attracted to both men and women in college. I used to say that I was "sexual" and felt that should explain it (I've heard quite a few other bi folks say this as well over time), but soon found out that sexual politics are much too complicated and you really need to identify in a way that explains a bit more to other people. I know a lot of people (especially younger folks) don't feel the term "bisexual" explains their identity any more. I still like it for myself, but I don't think there is any term that can capture the complexity of how any individual bi person expresses their sexuality. We are all so different that it truly is a short answer kind of thing, not a multiple-choice response.

**DM:** You mentioned that a lot of people don't feel the term "bisexual" explains their identity. I've heard some say the term is outdated, or too exclusive in meaning. What do you think?

**ER:** I still call myself bi or bisexual because it feels comfortable for me after being out for over 20 years as such. I understand other people's feelings towards the word and I know different generations like to discover new terminology but I'm happy with it. It's not unique to us. I've dated various women-loving women who each hated to use one or more of the terms lesbian, dyke, or queer—depending on their age, race, nationality, and experience. Everyone doesn't have to use the same identifying words as long as we keep communicating and working together.

**DM:** You've been a bi activist for quite some time. Can you share a situation in which you felt most gratified by this work? How about a time when you felt most challenged?

**ER:** One of the things I really enjoy about bi community activism is the larger gatherings where people get to see each other and feel validated by each other. Those are great. Also, while I was a commissioner on the Massachusetts



Commission for GLBT Youth, I had the opportunity to travel around the state and meet with gay/straight alliance members in many different settings. When some bi students talked about their own experiences of biphobia in their families or with their friends I felt good about being able to talk with them about resources and strategies for dealing with those experiences.

I still feel the most challenged when the gay and lesbian community makes yet another *faux pas* by not inviting bi people to a national march, or not using inclusive language in a civil rights campaign that I'm a part of, or when I hear a biphobic comment in a queer community setting that suddenly makes me feel uncomfortable and I have to figure out how to constructively engage the person to rethink what s/he said. I've done a lot of anti-racism work and diversity training work over the years and I've heard many people of color talk about being tired of having to constantly teach white people about racism and their experiences. They want white people to do some of the work themselves, and I heartily agree. And even though I see myself as a person who wants to engage and educate within the LGBT community, I also wish others would do some more of their own anti-biphobia work.

**DM:** Besides the Boston area, where else have you lived and experienced bi community? In comparison, what is unique about Boston's community?

**ER:** I've lived in two other communities since I've come out. One was Northampton, Massachusetts and the other was Columbus, Ohio. I was so excited to be out in such a queer-positive space as Northampton but it happened to be in 1989-1991 when the Pride parade went through a huge

*Ellyn, continues on next page*



**Ellyn**, *continued from previous page*

controversy about whether to include bisexuals or not. One year we were added and the next year we were removed. The local Queer Nation contingent took a pro-bi stance and organized people to walk at the front of the official parade with a big banner that said "Bisexual." There were several official Pride speakers who gave hateful anti-bi speeches provoking other protests by the crowd. I knew many people in Northampton who were supportive, but as a community at that time it was not very friendly to bis.

I lived in Columbus, Ohio in the early 90s and was involved with a local LGBT group and a small bi-specific group. I think the thing about Columbus is that there were still a lot of people in the LGBT community who were not completely out and that seemed to exacerbate the situation for bisexuals. One of my favorite memories is when the Ohio State group brought Lani Ka'ahumanu to campus to talk about bisexuality. That was great!

Boston's bi community does seem to be special. We are

established, we have several organizations serving different needs, and lots of us are very invested within the great LGBT community as well. I love the Boston bi community and feel incredibly comfortable within it.

**DM:** What message do you have for queer youth?

**ER:** Get involved in your community. Find a group to connect with and be active within it. It doesn't have to be political involvement, but find ways to learn about your community and how you can contribute to it. Many communities now have great resources for queer youth and there are often good organizations where you can feel safe and gain your confidence with your identity while also building leadership skills. If you can't find a community near you, find it virtually. You are not alone! Also, visit the new resources at [biyouth.org](http://biyouth.org) and tell others about them, too.

*Deb is a fun-loving bi woman who lives in Arlington, MA and enjoys hanging out with other bi and bi-friendly folks.*

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**Yemisi, Map**, *continued from page 4*

injury to one is an injury to all. I am doing my best as a trade unionist from a developing country to spread the message that we cannot rest on our oars until every worker is liberated from the yoke of oppression. I want to bring LGBT issues to the table of trade unions everywhere. These issues must no longer be swept under the carpet. LGBT workers must start demanding workplace protection from discrimination and that protection must be available to all workers irrespective of gender, color, race or country.

*Robyn is the editor of Bi Women and of the international anthology Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World.*



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**Borderlands**, *continued from page 1*

teasing under the guise of humor. Benton's workshop was a powerful validation of the stress that I frequently experience and also a reminder of why spaces such as TBC are so necessary.

Transcending Boundaries was a wonderful mixture of transgressors of gender binaries and strict categories of any kind. Fittingly, Tristan Taormino gave the keynote address: "Everyone's Invited to the Pool Party: How to Build a Supportive, Inclusive Community." She told an amusing tale of how she was able to create a comfortable and inclusive environment at her wedding for her trans and genderqueer guests as well as her straight gender normative birth family. She trained the staff and sent family members a gender

primer, alerting them to the diversity of gender expression they would see as well as letting them know: "You're going to meet three people who will look very much the same to you. One of those people identifies as male, one of those people identifies as female and one eschews gender altogether."

Of course, the bi presence was also in full force and I wasn't even able to attend all the bi specific workshops. I made it to "Bisexuality: Are We Still Invisible?" and "Getting Bi: Voices from Bisexuals Around the World." The former consisted of a panel that brought together bisexual and pansexual people as well as monogamous and non. Each story was interesting and each panelist has struggled with making themselves visible and feeling included

in the larger LGBT movement and community. My only complaint was – with five people who had a lot to say and only one hour to do it in – we were left with a litany of grievances but no plan or suggestions for how to move forward or make ourselves more visible. "Getting Bi..." was a lovely way to end the day. We formed a circle and took turns reading passages from Robyn Ochs and Sarah Rowley's book of the same title. In between each passage we discussed the variety of experiences and marveled at the strength of our bi brothers and sisters from far and wide.

*Amanda is a writer, photographer and bi activist living in Brooklyn, NY. ([www.AmandaMorgan.com](http://www.AmandaMorgan.com))*



# CREATING CHANGE 2010

## A Personal Perspective

By Lauren E. Spencer

Held in Dallas, Texas, this year's conference, the Task Force's 22nd and my third, inspired me, but also illuminated the work that lies ahead of us, particularly within our own community and movement.

What I love most about Creating Change is the wide range of identities that I encounter there. As a queer woman of color, I frequently find myself in the minority, either racially or sexually, in LGBTQ communities and communities of color respectively. On the opening day of the conference, I attended a day-long event titled "Building Bridges across Our Communities," which was an organizing institute for activists of color. I also spent a great deal of time in the People of Color Hospitality suite. I cannot fully articulate what I experience in spaces like these; it is best explained as a deep sense of belonging. I connected with people who, mere days ago, were complete strangers, but have since become close friends and even family. Being multiracial, it was of particular significance for me to be in a space that included people of many races and colors. I didn't feel like I was a less valid member of a monoracial community because of my mixed heritage; I am of color and subsequently, a full member of the queer community of color.

My time in these spaces was not without conflict, however. In both the day-long institute and the hospitality suite, the need for queer people of color

to have their own safe space was not recognized and respected; white conference attendees came to both spaces and some were argumentative when asked to leave.

This year's conference was the first Creating Change to feature a Bisexual Hospitality suite. I was delighted to see that the need for bisexual people to have a safe space and be visible was finally recognized. I loved connecting with members of our community in workshop or hospitality suite and recognizing them throughout the rest of the conference.

I experienced biphobia in Dallas; while at a club, I was talking to a woman who was clearly interested in me. When our conversation shifted to our coming out stories, she mentioned that she'd never been with men. Her demeanor briefly, but visibly changed when she learned that some of my sexual partners had been men. What I experienced at the nightclub is just one example of how I and other bisexual people have been perceived as less queer and a less valid part of the queer community because we don't have solely same-sex attractions. Similar to the way that I experienced racial validation in the POC suite, having a bi space at Creating Change challenged the perception that bisexuals are less queer, sending the message that our visibility is important and bisexual people are full members of the queer community. It is merely a step in the right direction, however. Here's to more visibility in our communities in the coming year and at Creating Change 2011!

*Lauren is an activist and student who focuses on intersecting identities, the connections among systems of oppression and LGBTQ communities of color.*



Robyn, Amanda, Lividia, Lauren & Chrysanthie



## The Bi Institute

By Amanda Morgan

This year at Creating Change was a momentous one for bisexuals and people who have a profound and deep commitment to sexual liberation. The year 2010 marks the first time (out of twenty-two years) for the Bi/Fluid/Pan Day-long Organizing Institute as well as the Sexual Freedom track, which also included an institute of its own and a series of workshops, many of which included bi presenters.

The Bi Institute, as it was called, was an exciting achievement. Those of you who attended the Bi Caucus in 2009 or perhaps read my account of it in last year's Bi Women, probably recall that one of the requests we made of the Task Force was that they provide bi leadership development. The folks at the Task Force listened and we had both an institute and a hospitality suite. Those eight hours we spent together during the institute were productive and passionate. Additionally, I feel I must mention, the room was packed. We had to bring in more chairs than the organizers had planned on. It was a great feeling. We broke down what we decided as a group were the four main areas we need to focus our energies on in the coming year: 1. Education (both internal and external) and Outreach; 2. Intersectionality; 3. Developing/Strengthening the Infrastructure of the Bi Movement; 4. Mentoring New Leaders. Within those headers, concrete plans were made as to how to address each. It was truly a fruitful occasion and I can't wait to see how our efforts continue to progress.

*Amanda is a writer, photographer and bi activist living in Brooklyn, NY. (www.AmandaMorgan.com)*



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## Calendar, continued from page 20

dancing and Kate Clinton as emcee. Tix are \$175 so it's not a cheap night out, but supports a great resource. Womensdinnerparty.org for more info.

**Tuesday, March 16, 6:30-9pm. Boundless Program: How Toxic is Your Bust?** A film screening and discussion about breast cancer and the environment at Fenway Health, **9th floor, 1340 Boylston Street, Boston**. Did you know there could be a connection between your sex toys and breast cancer? How about your shampoo or shower curtain? Join us as we explore the connection between breast cancer and environmental toxins through a screening of the thought-provoking documentary, *Toxic Bust*. After the film, learn how to be proactive about your health! **FREE! Refreshments provided.** RSVP to 617-927-6028 or [boundless@fenwayhealth.org](mailto:boundless@fenwayhealth.org).

**Thursday, March 18, 7pm. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** 3rd Thursday meetings are 7-8 p.m. check-ins, discussion, and announcements followed by social time at a nearby restaurant. Only want to socialize? Meet the group around 8 p.m. in the lobby of Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St., Boston.

**Saturday, March 20, 11:30am. Bi Brunch.** This mixed gender bi group meets 3rd Saturdays at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq. in Somerville. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

## APRIL

**Wednesday, April 7, 7-8:45pm. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** Bisexual Resource Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. (See March 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**Monday, April 12, 7pm. Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See March 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Tuesday, April 13, 7-9pm. BRC Board Meeting.** (See March 9<sup>th</sup>)

**Thursday, April 15, 7pm. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** (See March 18<sup>th</sup>)

**Friday-Sunday, April 16-18, BECAUSE Conference** (Bisexual Empowerment Conference: A Uniting, Supportive Experience) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The premier weekend event in the Midwest for bisexuals, queers, trans, bi-curious, questioning, and others, regardless of identity. This conference is open to *everyone!*

Visit [www.becauseconference.org](http://www.becauseconference.org) for more info.

**Saturday, April 17, 11:30am. Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See March 20<sup>th</sup>)

**Saturday, April 24, noon. BBWN Brunch in Arlington at Steph's.** Please bring a potluck dish and/or drinks to share. Also, be ready to share something about a favorite famous bi, (living or dead). Email Steph at [smiserlis@gmail.com](mailto:smiserlis@gmail.com) to RSVP/get directions. A great way to meet other bi/bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

## MAY

**Wednesday, May 5, 7pm. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** (See March 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**Monday, May 10, 7pm. Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See March 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Tuesday, May 11, 7-9pm. BRC Board Meeting.** (See March 9<sup>th</sup>)

**Thursday, May 20, 7pm. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** (See March 18<sup>th</sup>)

**Saturday, May 15, 11:30am. Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See March 20<sup>th</sup>)

**Saturday, May 22, 12-3pm. BBWN's Potluck Brunch at Robyn's** in JP. Please bring a potluck dish and/or drinks to share. Email Robyn at [robyn@robynochs.com](mailto:robyn@robynochs.com) or call 617-413-2717. A great way to meet other bi/bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

Join us at one of  
BBWN's fabulous  
potluck brunches for bi women  
and our friends. Our brunches  
are held in women's homes,  
and ALL women are welcome.  
See our calendar or details.





## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

## Ongoing Events

### Last Fridays:

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30-9pm at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

### 2nd Mondays:

**Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** 7pm. Email [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com) for more info.

### 1st Wednesdays, 3rd Thursdays:

**BLISS: Bisexual Support & Social Group,** 7-8:45pm. Meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

### 3rd Saturdays:

**Biversity Bi Brunch,** 11:30am at Johnny D's, Davis Square, Somerville.

**Sign up for our Boston-area email list! Send an email to: [biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)**



## Ask not what Bi Women can do for you ...

Dear Reader,

Help us send *Bi Women* to you, to other women, and also to community centers, youth groups and campus LGBT groups, and to make copies of *Bi Women* available at events and conferences. Think of the support that *Bi Women* has provided to you, and give generously because your contribution will indeed make a difference in many, many lives. It will only take a minute and you will make a difference.

So far, we have raised \$1558 toward our annual goal of \$5000. No donation is too small (and no donation is too large).

Make your checks payable to BBWN, PO Box 301727, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Or you can donate on line via paypal to [biwomenboston@gmail.com](mailto:biwomenboston@gmail.com). For more information, visit our website: [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).

**Remember: YOU can make a difference.**



*Sarah, Linda & Jennifer, at a newsletter stuffing*

# CALENDAR

## MARCH

**Wednesday, March 3, 7-8:45pm. Bisexual Social and Support Group (BliSS).** Meets monthly 1st Wed. & 3rd Thurs. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. All bi/bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations welcome. 1<sup>st</sup> Wed. meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Info: [brc@biresource.net](mailto:brc@biresource.net).

**Sunday, March 7, 11:30am-1:30pm. (NOTE THE EARLY START!) BBWN Potluck Brunch** at Jennifer's in Jamaica Plain CoHousing. Please bring a potluck dish and/or drinks to share. Easy parking & one block from the T. To RSVP or for info: [isis.jenn@gmail.com](mailto:isis.jenn@gmail.com) or 857-205-6778. A great opportunity to meet other bi & bi-friendly women in Boston area.

**Monday, March 8, 7pm. Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** A peer-led support group

for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Info: [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com). Group meets on 2nd Mondays.

**Tuesday, March 9, 7-9pm. Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting.** All bi/bi-friendly community members welcome. Info: Ellyn at [president@biresource.net](mailto:president@biresource.net). The meeting is at Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. near Back Bay station on the Orange Line.

**Saturday-Sunday, March 12-13. True Colors Conference for LGBTQIA Youth** on University of Connecticut's campus in Storrs. Info: [Ourtruecolors.org](http://Ourtruecolors.org).

**Saturday, March 13. The Women's Dinner Party,** Boston Marriott Copley Place. Fenway Health's annual women's fundraiser includes a great night out in downtown Boston with several hundred fabulous women. Dinner,

**Calendar** continues on page 19



# Bi Women

Summer 2010: June/July/August  
Vol. 28 No. 3 • Bodies

A newsletter produced by the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, for women everywhere

## Do Clothes Make the Woman?

By Marcia Deihl

Years before I came out, I dressed as a Marlene Dietrich sort of dyke for Halloween. I loved how I felt. Later, I wondered if anyone else had ever dressed up on Halloween as a future self. Wasn't it just for fun? Didn't most people just like being a whore-for-a-day (what class entitlement to think that such a life would be "fun"! or a hobo (ditto)? Only my gay friends responded in the affirmative. "Of course! It was crucial to my childhood survival! Thank God for Halloween!" No wonder the Halloween Parade in New York City is one of the great gay holidays.

Thinking back to my early years, I leafed through my diaries trying to see at what age my "sexual identity" began. And how much of that was mandated (hmmm, good word, that) by the mid-sixties culture surrounding me? How much was the soul, whispering underneath all the learned gender messages, deeply hidden but leaking out from the edges of consciousness?

*Clothes, continues on p. 8*

## Restless

By Lara Zielinsky

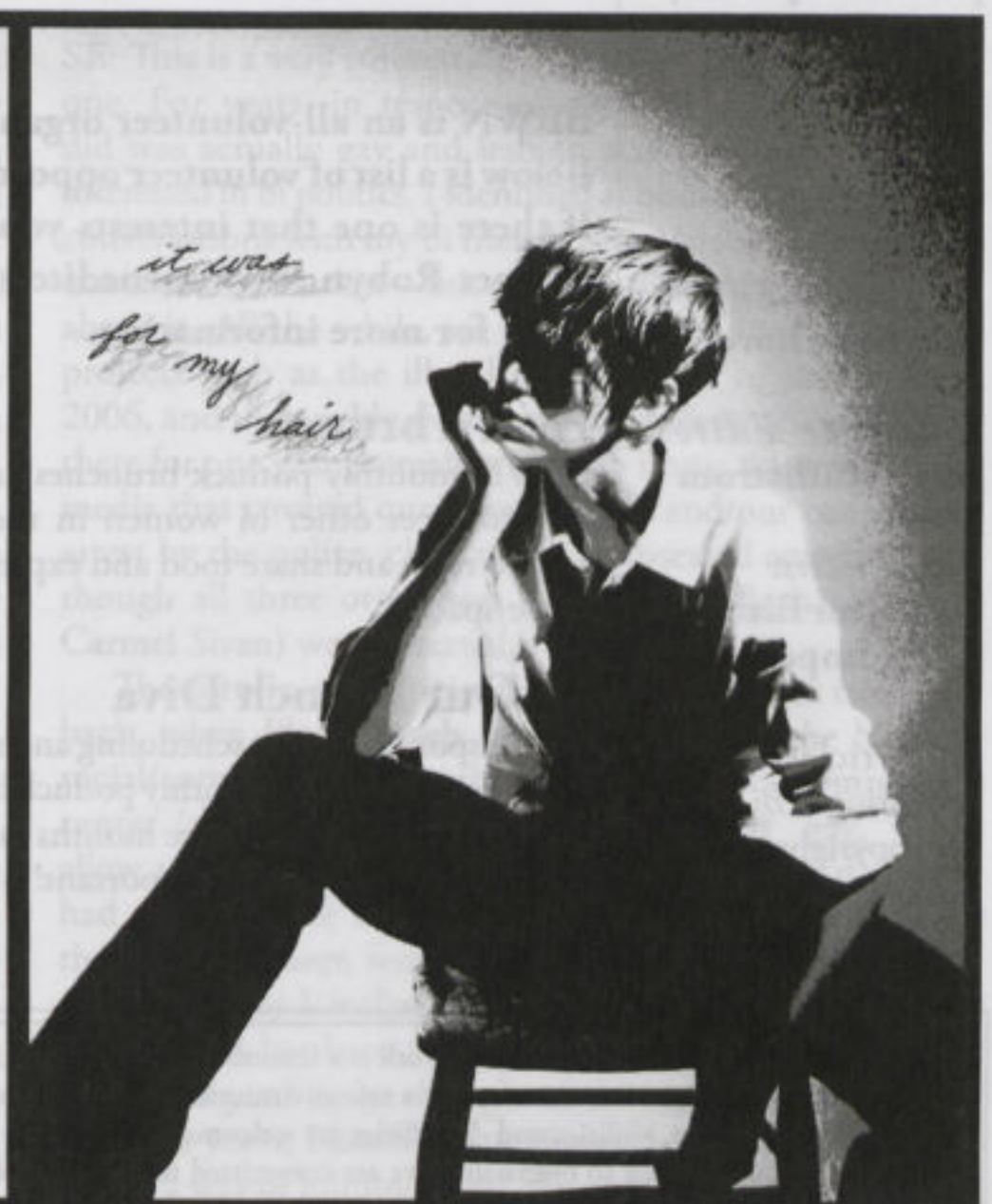
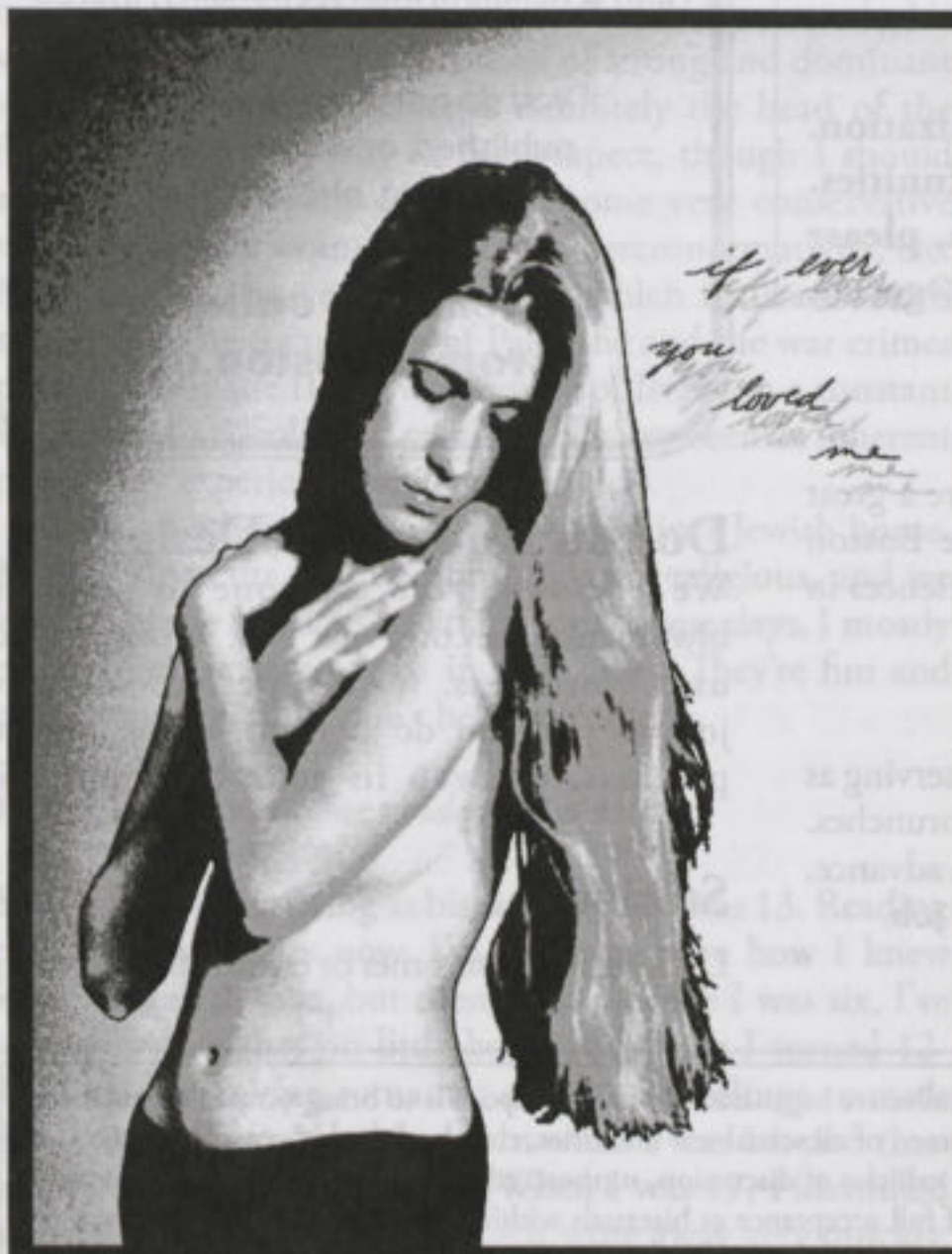
The hour rolled over. 3:59. 4:00. Four a.m. Cassidy's eyes slowly rotated away from the digital clock's red numbers, taking in the deep shadows of the rest of the room as she lay on her back.

The desk lay outlined with its lamp stalk hunched over piles of papers. The ladder struts of the chair back drew her eye to tracing their orderliness.

Her arms held loosely to Brenna's smooth bare shoulders and she dropped her chin, pressing her lips to the dark hair on top of Brenna's head. She felt the expansion and contraction of Brenna's chest against her own side. Her breathing was even, and warm wisps of it drifted from Brenna's nostrils across Cassidy's collarbone.

Trying to focus on the rhythmic, calm breathing, Cassidy sought to match it, but her heart would not slow down. Her mind filled with images, fleeting and pandemonious.

*Restless, continues on p. 9*



"If Ever You Loved Me" / "It Was For My Hair" by Joni Moore. More of her art, and information about the artist on page 7.



## HONOR ROLL

Justin Adkins  
Katelynn Bishop  
Linda Blair  
Jen Bonardi  
Katrina Chaves  
Fennel  
Carla Imperial  
Megan Jewett  
Susanah Layton  
Linda McMahan  
Steph Miserlis  
Deb Morley  
Robyn Ochs  
Ellyn Ruthstrom  
Laurie Wolfe  
Gail Zacharias  
Special thanks  
to Lewis &  
Gabe.

And many more  
fabulous people!  
You know who  
you are!

*Bi Women is  
published quarterly.*

## STAFF

*Editor:*  
**Robyn Ochs**

*Assistant Editor:*  
**Katrina Chaves**

*Calendar Editor:*  
**Ellyn Ruthstrom**

*Proofreaders:*  
**Katelynn Bishop**  
**Carla Imperial**

All articles and art  
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are copyrighted by the  
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## From your editor

For this issue, you were invited to talk about your bodies: Body image. Gendered bodies. Bodies and health. Changing bodies. Bodies converging and merging. Bodies as objects and/or subjects of attraction. Sexuality and the body.

And you did. The submissions came pouring in. For every piece that I was able to squeeze in, there was another I was forced to put aside for future use.

This is an exciting issue, packed with creativity. You will find poetry by Cari Allen, Casey Lyons and Lividia I. Violette; stunning visual images by Joni Moore; short fiction by Lara Zielinsky and Monica Meneghetti; and essays by Marcia Deihl and Rooster Girl. Amanda Morgan reports on the BECAUSE Conference, Debbie Block-Schwenk and Lara Zielinsky review recent fiction, Katrina Chaves provides news briefs, and my "Bis Around the World" feature takes you to Israel.

I hope you enjoy reading. And please consider writing for the next issue: "Bi & Single."  
--Robyn

**BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Below is a list of volunteer opportunities. If there is one that interests you, please contact Robyn (biwomeneditor@gmail.com) for more information.**

### Host a brunch

BBWN monthly potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area to relax and share food and experiences in a safe space.

### Be Our Brunch Diva

Take responsibility for scheduling and serving as point person for our monthly potluck brunches. We schedule brunches three months in advance. This is a very easy – but important! – job.

## Next in Bi Women

The theme for the Fall '10 issue:

### Bi & Single

**Dating. Not dating.** If you're single and looking, where & how do you meet people? Finding/dating men/women: different or the same & how? When & how do you come out as bi to potential partners? If you're sexually active, how do you deal with safer sex? If you're single and happy that way, tell us why. The pros & cons of being single.

**Submissions for the next issue must be received by August 5th.**

Send your submissions and suggestions for future topics to  
[biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)

Upcoming themes may include:

Fantasy; Choice; Out at Work;  
Faith & Religion; Intersectionality; more...

If you do not want your name published, or wish to use a pseudonym, please tell us.

**Bi Women is online at  
[biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).**

## Do You Know Web Design?

We're looking for someone to maintain [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org), our new website, which uses WordPress. It's the perfect volunteer job, as you can do it from home, in your pajamas, or even in your birthday suit.

## Students:

Looking for an summer or term-time internship?

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.



# Bis Around the World: Shiri Eisner, Israel

By Robyn Ochs

**Robyn Ochs:** *Shiri, please tell us about yourself.*

**Shiri Eisner:** I am a 27-year-old female gender queer. I am a feminist, anarchist, vegan, polyamorous, bisexual/pansexual and a sex radical. I do a lot of stuff in general, such as grassroots organizing, academics, journalist writing, and art. I started (and currently organize) the second-ever and only currently active bisexual/pansexual organization in Israel, Panorama – a bi and pansexual feminist community. (The previous bi organization was Bisexuals in Israel, headed by Daniel Hoffman and Elad Livneh, which stopped its activity in 2007.)

I am the mixed-raced child of an Iraqi-heritage mother and a German-heritage father (one of many mixed-race second-generation children in Jewish-Israeli society). While acknowledging my mixed-race heritage, I draw primarily on the Mizrahi (Arabic-Jewish) cultural influences from my mother's side of the family, as this side has been most dominant throughout my life. (Now that my paternal grandmother has passed away, all of my dad's family is in Germany, and there aren't many of them, either, courtesy of Hitler). My family on my mom's side (by which I mean, my mother, my aunts, my grandmother and my cousins) is very matriarchal and is comprised of strong and dominant women – my grandmother is definitely the head of the family. I feel very lucky in that respect, though I should also mention that my family has some very conservative values regarding women, marriage, heteronormativity, etc. My family is also very right wing, which in Israel means supporting the occupation of Palestine and the war crimes performed by the IDF and the state of Israel on a constant basis. And so, ideological rebellion has also been an inherent part of my experience while growing up.

I am an atheist, though I was raised in a Jewish home. My grandparents on my mom's side are religious, and we keep all of the holidays and traditions. These days, I mostly enjoy all these ceremonies in a wry way. They're fun and often amusing, but I don't believe in them.

**RO:** *How did you come to identify as bi?*

**SE:** I started identifying as bisexual when I was 13. Reading back on my diaries now, I'm not even sure how I knew what "bisexual" was, but there it was. Since I was six, I've always had crushes on little boys, and when I turned 12-13, I started having romantic and erotic feelings towards girls as well. I wrote lesbian porn when I was 14, and then lesbian poetry when I was 16. When I was 17, I identified as lesbian for about 5 minutes – it wore away very quickly, as I had a boyfriend at the time...



These days I identify as both bisexual and pansexual. I think pansexuality is a wonderful word which allows us the opportunity to speak about non-binary genders and sexes, and in some contexts, to emphasize our inclusiveness of them. However, I still feel that "bisexual" is my word. It's more personal for me, since I've had it for so long, and I don't think it contradicts inclusiveness or non-binarism. (On the contrary, I sometimes feel that bisexuality is the more inclusive of the two, since bisexual discourse generally tends to accept pansexuality, but often, and ironically, not vice versa).

**RO:** *How did you become interested in bi politics?*

**SE:** This is a very interesting question – and an important one. For years, in respect of my BTLG activism, all I did was actually gay and lesbian activism, and I was not interested in bi politics. I identified as bisexual and had many conversations with my bi friends about bisexual invisibility, erasure and exclusion – but we never thought to do anything about it. All the while, we were busy working on activist projects such as the illegal pride parade in Jerusalem in 2006, and the weekly queer protest vigils which took place there for one year thereafter. It's also ironic to note that the media that covered our illegal parade and our consequent arrest by the police, cited us as homosexual activists, even though all three organizers (me, Leehee Rothschild and Carmel Sivan) were bisexual.

The turn in my activist thought came about two years back, when Elad Livneh started organizing the bisexual social/support group at the Tel Aviv BTLG community center (the center itself actually calls itself "gay," but I allow myself some liberty here). At this point, I'd already had considerable experience with grassroots organizing through my queer, feminist and anti-occupation activism. And suddenly I realized that I could do this as well – a topic which has been so important to me throughout the years, and yet I never thought to do any activism about it. All these years, I knew about Bisexuals in Israel, but never found a way of joining them. For years I'd been waiting for

*Shiri, continues on next page*



*Shiri, continued from previous page*

a group to start in Tel Aviv (at some point one was started in Jerusalem, but it was too far away for me to attend). With the founding of this new group, suddenly my brain pulled the switch to bring together my bisexuality and my political activism. So I started a bi/pansexual film club at the BTLG center (which I called the B-Movies), which is still running. I started a national mailing list for bis and pansexuals in Israel and I started organizing parties and community events. I organized the bisexual block at the pride parades in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and around that time also started Panorama, which is where I do most of my bi activism these days.

**RO:** *What is the legal and cultural status of BTLGQ people in Israel? Can you talk about bi and BTLGQ activism in your country?*

**SE:** When I think about this issue, the first thing on my mind is the shooting at the GLBT Association's youth club in Tel Aviv (Bar-No'ar). On August 1st, 2009, a masked person entered the youth club and started shooting the people who were there. Two people died (26-year-old Nir Katz, and 17-year-old Liz Troubish) and many more were injured. The killer has not yet been caught by the police and still roams free.

And so, I don't think we are doing well. Tel Aviv was supposed to be the BTLG haven of Israel, where we thought that we were safe and protected, or at least liked to think that we were. This incident showed us that we were never safe, that we cannot be safe and must not sink into complacency as we did before. However, ironically, the shooting sent us all so deep into trauma that we hardly managed to do anything at all in response. I'm a bit angry with myself (and with the whole community) in that respect – the community spent the whole week after the shooting licking its own wounds and busy with internal struggles. We should have gone out there and blocked a main road, we should have organized demonstrations at the house of the head of the police and at the Knesset. We should have been flooding the hospitals visiting the survivors. But instead, we just drew back into ourselves, leaving only a handful of rallies in our wake.

The other issue that comes to mind is that of the occupation. Israeli society is violent and militarist, and all other areas of public life are subordinated to the perpetuation of the occupation and the Zionist regime. And so, BTLG people are only accepted in Israeli society if they are Jewish and Zionist (preferably cisgender males), but not otherwise. In addition, Israel often tries to paint itself as the BTLG haven of the Middle East, but this is only true for a small group of (mostly male, Ashkenazi and middle class) Jewish BTLG's. Needless to say, however, Palestinians BTLG's under Israeli dominion are denied even the most basic human rights such as freedom of movement, education, medical care, etc. Whenever I hear talk of Israel presenting

itself as a liberal BTLG haven, I always feel appalled, since this false presentation is in fact based on a regime of apartheid and oppression. In that, I am in complete solidarity with my Palestinian sisters and brothers in their struggle to raise awareness about their oppression under Israeli occupation, as well as their struggle for freedom.

And of course, we can't separate these two things, either. In a society where it's acceptable to oppress another people on a daily basis; where racism, hatred and militarism are commonplace, mainstream and even a requirement for good citizenship; in a society where the slaughter of over 1,000 people in Gaza was performed without a hitch and supported by most of the population, it's going to be okay to go out and kill other people based on their difference and their deviance from the required mainstream. The shooting was done with a military rifle, and we must never forget that. Violence produces violence, and a violent, militarist society creates internal violence, hatred and murder.

**RO:** *From what you can tell, what is unique about bi organizing in Israel?*

**SE:** In relation to other countries, the bi/pan struggle in Israel is very new – just a few years old. And so, we are facing a lot of biphobia, lack of awareness, lack of resources, etc. The (absolutely wonderful, yet small) bisexual community itself has only been in existence as such for two years, and most of the broader BTLG community is still unaware of us – though we are starting to make some huge differences and to create some very positive changes. For example, the rally after the shooting was the first-ever large BTLG event to include a speaker representing the bisexual community. This is a huge achievement that I'm very proud of, seeing as half of my energy as a bi activist is spent on trying to explain to the people in charge that we do actually deserve representation. There is still a lot of work to be done, but we are definitely working on it.

Another thing that I find unique is that so far, we have set the agenda of the local bisexual/pansexual struggle as a radical one, rather than liberal as often seems to be the case with bi politics in other countries. Most of our community leaders are people not only involved with BTLG politics, but also with all kinds of radical politics such as radical-queer politics, feminism, radical left, crip struggle, animal rights, etc. – all theories that raise questions about the core values of society and seek to subvert them from the base. I think that our radical methods and tactics allow us to be more active, vocal and visible. The experience that many of us have gained through our activism in these other fields has contributed to our understanding of how power structures work and how to oppose them.

**RO:** *What connections do you have with bi and/or TLG activists in other countries? Does your knowledge of or contacts*

*Shiri, continues on next page*



Shiri, continued from previous page

*with bi or BTLG activism in other countries influence your activism in Israel? Do you see value in transnational activism?*

**SE:** I'm in contact with several American, Canadian and European queer activists (mostly bi activists). I find value in networking, first and foremost for solidarity, but also for exchanging information and receiving updates on various struggles in other countries. We can exchange ideas, viewpoints and methods with activists from other countries. I receive inspiration from other people's stories and perspectives. Since our struggle in Israel is so very new, I feel that I have a lot to learn from other people's experience. What worked, and what didn't? What can I use for my local struggle? What would I do differently? It also feels really good to receive outside support and recognition. For example, Panorama recently received a small, yet very helpful, donation from Holland BiCon. Being in touch with the BiCon organizers has been great, and their solidarity and kindness are well-appreciated.

**RO:** *You're an academic in addition to being an activist. What are your interests? What are you studying/working on?*

**SE:** I'm currently finishing my BA in interdisciplinary arts, which means that during my degree, I was pretty much all over the arts and humanities. This year, my last, I've been getting to focus more on my three majors: gender studies, film and art history. And it was only this year that I've finally gotten to research bisexual issues, which I've never gotten to do in the past. Now I feel like I found my true calling.

I am currently working on two research papers: one about the representation of bisexual women in mainstream and alternative porn, and the other about the repression of bisexuality in film. And I spoke about the latter in May at the Other Sex convention, Israel's annual queer studies convention. So I'm very proud and happy about that.

I'm also starting to think about my MA. I know I want it to be about bisexuality and film, and I've had a few ideas so far. One is bisexual vampires (a long-beloved topic of mine), and the other is female bisexual spectatorship in lesbian movies. So maybe I'll end up writing my thesis on female bisexual spectatorship in lesbian vampire movies...

**RO:** *You started an international discussion group for bi academics. What prompted that? What is the purpose of this list? Who is it for, and how can interested parties join?*

**SE:** I started the list a couple of months ago following a discussion on USA BiNet's mailing list. During the discussion, I was surprised to find that there was no existing list devoted



to bi/pan/fluid theory and bisexual studies. I also saw that many people seemed interested in opening such a list, and so I followed up and registered a list with Yahoo. The good people from USA BiNet helped me promote it. We now have close to 200 members from around the world, with some very interesting discussions.

The list is intended for anyone interested in queer and bisexual/pansexual/fluid studies, and especially academics who wish to share knowledge and resources in the field. To join it, go to [http://groups.yahoo.com/academic\\_bi/](http://groups.yahoo.com/academic_bi/).

**RO:** *And finally, the theme of the current issue is "Bodies," so can you say something related to this topic?*

**SE:** Here is the story of how I came to appreciate my own body. As a Mizrahi (racialized) woman raised in an Ashkenazi- (white-) dominated society, the beauty standards imposed on me have always been white. I am darkly colored, with mocha skin, brown eyes and long, rich dark brown hair. My body is hourglass-shaped, with large breasts, thin waist and large hips, all quite different from the well-trimmed, pale-colored standard of white beauty. I was never much given into weight or body image problems (or at least, not as much as the other women in my family), though I did have my share of dieting (age 12) and weighing myself (which always made me feel awful, and which, for that reason, I eventually stopped). I'd always considered parts of my body to be too big, too ample - my breasts, my nipples and my hips were always "too big," my legs, arms and stomach were "too hairy." All the while I never strayed from the ranges of normal weight, and always had people complimenting me on my appearance, whether family, friends or lovers.

Then in 2004, I went to hear a lecture in a course about Islamic art. The professor showed us pictures of statues of women in the palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar, and read us a poem from the period describing the ideal female beauty (which was depicted in the statues). To my surprise, the poem described a woman with the exact same body type as mine. It described her large hips, narrow waist, large breasts; her long, rich and dark hair. I was in awe. For the first time I realized that my body, in Arabic culture, was the ideal, had value of its own right. From feeling merely tolerant towards my body, I came to appreciate it for what it was: a different form of beauty. I don't think my professor ever knew what a huge impact that lecture had on me.

Later on in life, I also stopped shaving my body hair. I have a lot to say about this, too. But perhaps another time...



## My Size

by Cari Allen

Forty-one, thirty-five, forty-five. And fourteen.

Those are my numbers.

My measurements and my clothing size.

They all add up to make me, me.

This is not oversized, plus size, queen size, right size, or wrong size.

This is my size.

I may never be on the cover of a magazine because

I'm not their size.

But this is the size people paint sought after masterpieces  
that bring titillation from aficionados and large dollar amounts from  
collectors.

How much does that magazine cost again?

There will never be a staple across my abdomen because

I'm not two-dimensional.

I have undulating supple curves that can go for days  
and soft pink breasts that swell with every breath and every month.

With one swing of my round full hips,

you will lose your breath and your religion

but still have enough left of both to whisper "Thank you, God."

I will never be a supermodel because

I'm not a sample size.

Who wants to be sampled?

I want to be enjoyed fully, tasted completely, loved mercilessly.

If you sit at my table, come prepared for a feast that will last for hours  
until you are as full as I am.

My tummy isn't flat

and my ass certainly isn't either.

Everyone knows the curvy, hilly roads

are the funnest ones to drive.

I glad I'm not skin and bones...don't you save the bones for the dogs?

Forty-one, thirty-five, forty-five. And fourteen.

Those are my numbers.

My measurements and my clothing size.

They all add up to a perfect ten.

*Cari is a member of Kentucky Slam Poetry Jam and a graduate student  
at the University of Kentucky.*

## Fish Nets

By Monica Meneghetti

I unlace Rita's twenty-eyelet boots.  
Carpet fibres embed themselves in my  
kneecaps. I imagine the carpet as orange  
shag because Lord Nelson Inn feels so old.

Rita sits on the end of the orange-  
and-brown-clad bed, sits on the synthetic  
bedspread and pulls off her boots. Her dark  
hair draws a curtain over radiant skin. I  
move to kneel in front of her. With delicate  
fingers, she sweeps strands from her lips, still  
crimson after hours of dancing and kissing.  
She looks at me, hands resting on thighs.  
She looks at me sternly, not tenderly, and  
says, "Aren't you a good little slut."

I watch her legs straighten within fishnet  
tights, watch her stride over to the patio  
window and draw open the curtains, draw  
them open as wide as they will go, exposing  
a miniscule balcony and Calgary's skyline  
glinting below our room like costume  
jewelry. I watch her legs getting closer. Her  
little diamonds of flesh move toward me.

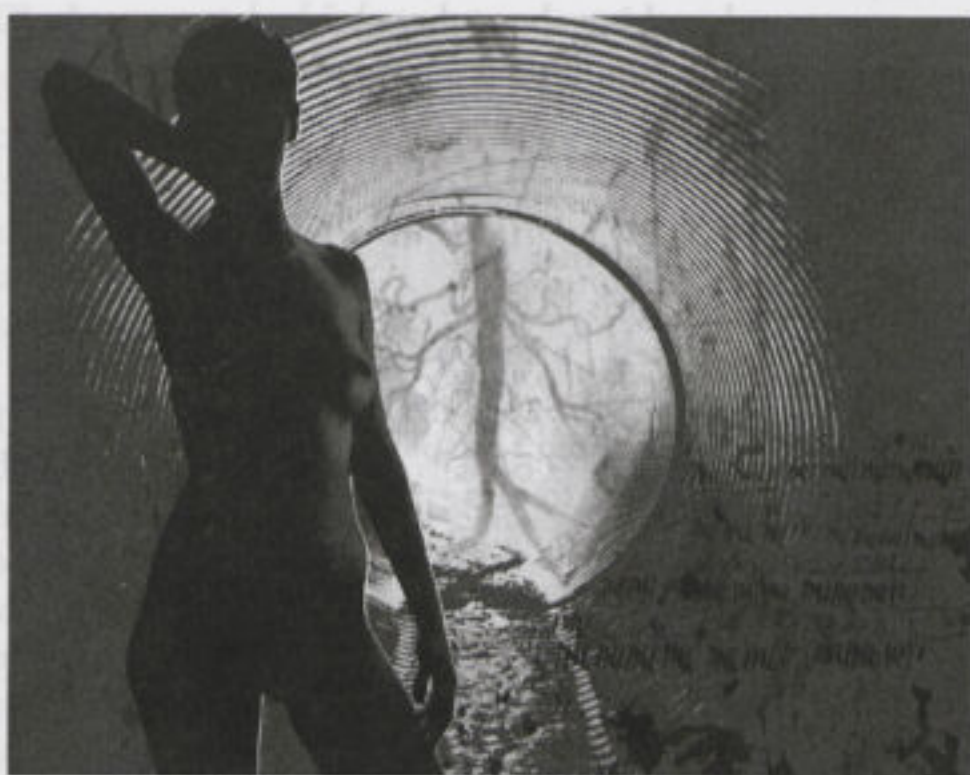
Rita walks around me, around me, on  
the carpet that has compressed beneath a  
thousand strides and holds the shape of  
anonymous feet. In this moment, I know:  
though many bodies have slid together and  
called out in this room, this moment is new.  
This compliance in me. This servitude. This  
waiting. Are new.

This is the first time anyone has made  
me want to kneel.

My jaw drops slightly. My shoulders, too,  
as relief settles into my bones. When her  
legs get even closer, I tilt my head upward  
and her feline eyes hold my gaze. She moves  
closer still, rests her thigh against my cheek.  
Scent of sweat and leather against my cheek.  
I turn my head, open my mouth, bare my  
teeth and hook her fishnet in my incisors.  
I pull, pull and rip, rip and rip, until her  
skin is bare, until my teeth are flossed with  
black thread.

*Visit [www.monicameneghetti.com](http://www.monicameneghetti.com) for more  
about this multi-genre writer based in Banff,  
Canada.*





Finite



Gemini

## About Joni Moore

These photographs are part of "Smoke and Mirrors," a collection of artwork by Joni Moore that examines the layers of oneself. Do we see ourselves through mirrors – and whose mirrors are those? The imagery in Ms. Moore's work contains elements from her past and present, fragments of herself, delicately pieced together to form her convoluted vision of self. Through self-portraiture and digital image manipulation, she has created visual stories of who she once was, who she is, and who she hopes to become.

The paintings and, indeed, the life of Frida Kahlo have been a major influence on Ms. Moore's artwork. The diptych "If Ever You Loved Me" / "It Was For My Hair" (on page 1) pay homage to her work. Another influence is music: when she is creating a piece, she is sometimes so greatly inspired by the music to which she is listening that to not make this reference would make the piece less than whole; thus, on the piece "Superhero," (not shown) she has handwritten lyrics, the words of musician Ani DiFranco.

This exhibit fulfills the requirements for Ms. Moore's senior art review at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, earning her a BA in Fine Arts.

If you would like to view other works from this and other collections, please visit Ms. Moore's online gallery at [www.facebook.com/people/Joni-Moore-Photographer/100001004662661](http://www.facebook.com/people/Joni-Moore-Photographer/100001004662661), or contact her at [jojomo27@gmail.com](mailto:jojomo27@gmail.com).

## Fourteen Months

By Casey Lyons  
12/17/2009

### Fourteen Months

and still you chase me in circles.  
The violence you brought forth  
reverberates like a note  
my inner ear keeps hearing.

Fourteen months,  
and still you disrupt my sleep.  
You hang around unwelcome  
in the space behind my eyes.

I dreamed some weeks ago  
that you confessed,  
repented,  
and I dreamed last night that you'd been framed.

But my waking wish  
is that all my memories of you  
were in my appendix,  
so I could cut them out with a blade.

Instead they're in my uterus,  
waxing and waning,  
part of my circadian rhythm,  
and I cannot bleed them away.

*Casey Lyons is a queer feminist poet from Kentucky and has worked with a variety of GLBT organizations there.*



*Clothes, continued from p. 1*

I saw that I'd always felt like a "female female impersonator" when I wore a dress. I'd also always loved drag queens, and they looked better than I did as a woman, and got more joy out of playing a traditionally female role. But in my twenties, my feminist friends frowned on men in drag, saying that they were oppressing women and mocking women's market-made excesses. I thought they were simply following a sort of theatrical-spiritual mandate. In fact, camp culture was part of the reason I had left my small town for a city as soon as I could. Queens were my compatriots, misfits in gender land.

Who would've thought that I'd have my own born-again dress-wearing experience at age thirty? I was a member of the Boston branch of "Ladies Against Women," a satirical theater troupe which shouted slogans like, "Procreation, Not Recreation; Close Your Eyes and Do Your Duty!" at right-winger Phyllis Schlafly appearances. The others changed out of their dresses and into comfortable corduroy pants. (And yes, flannel shirts and work boots. But no one I know ever burned a bra. That was just a feminist theater event in Atlantic City on the boardwalk, and they really only threw their bras in a waste basket. Why burn them and make a mess? Just take the damn things off and hang loose.)

The night of the Ladies Against Women performance, I slowly realized I *liked* that white polka dot flouncy dress I was wearing. I actually looked, well, cute. Pretty. Attractive. For the first time in my life. I felt like the real me, not a self-parody, in a dress. Oh, did I mention that I'd just lost fifty pounds and left my lesbian lover?

Some of my dyke pals were not happy about this. I felt bad. For years. But since when did I answer to them? I rebelled against the "Them" of the Viet Nam war mongers, and yet I could not bring myself to rant in public against my lesbian sisters. Privately, it was another story. Would they change their sex partner choices if I asked them to? Of course not. Personal life is just that—personal. I knew of a commune in Vermont where bedmates were chosen by lot, so as not to slight anyone who was not as attractive or popular. Isn't sleeping with someone you're not interested in a form of self-inflicted sexual abuse? Why should I be a lifetime martyr to their opinion of me? I never said the above thoughts to them, but it cost me hours of diary writing and several hundred dollars' worth of therapist's bills. As Zippie the Pinhead said, "My libido has a mind of its own." I left her for myself, not for a man.

I claimed that I was still a woman-identified woman, even if I wanted to date men. In the end, a political movement is about politics—marching, lobbying, writing. And that stayed the same. I had no ID card in my pocket to show at Women's Music Festivals, and if you knew me, you knew who I wanted to be with; if you didn't, it was none of your business. Plus, I was a foot soldier in a huge movement, not a Fidel Castro, so what I did in my private life went largely unnoticed. It was my activism that was

important, and nothing about that changed.

I'd always had a handle on outer empowerment, and then I began the inner part. I went back as usual to my diaries, where I was writing my true heart, way before politics and self censorship crept in.

My diary revealed that I did like men the most, but they didn't like fat girls like me. Or so I assumed. I'd also started calling myself "bisexual" at age twenty. When I turned thirty and lost fifty pounds, men noticed me for the first time. I guess I wanted to explore that option. When I realized how easy it was to be a "sex object"—just makeup and a certain walk will do a lot, as drag queens know—I couldn't help trying out some dates with "cute guys." But it was almost too easy. After about a month, I yearned for my ugly duckling, poetic-minded, eccentric friends. Well, I thought, the trick is to find a cute eccentric guy. I needed a fairy tale guy—"half fairy and half tail," as one writer put it. But it seemed those guys were all taken by women with more field experience.

Now when I dressed in pants, men thought I was a sexy butch, not a fat slob. I was cowed to realize that I had to get a normal body before I could love myself, for unlike many of my big woman friends, I had always been plagued by recurring nightmares of ghoulish dancing elephants in pink tutus. It started, of course, when I was young and my brother called me "Fats." But what now? If a gay woman dressed like Barbara Bush and a straight woman dressed like Barbie, what did I choose to wear? And why would that even matter? Lipstick lesbians were cover-girl beautiful and Barbara Bush was straight. Thirty years before, you would not have found a professional or senior-aged woman in pants, except for a few devil-may-care retired anthropologists and writers.

Clothing aside, what was my sexual identity? I did not consider myself an ex-gay—I was a Kinsey 2. First I went to a coming out support group and, as usual, fell in love with all the gay men. No more of that for me; I deserved reciprocity. So I thought, "Where are bisexuals?" Everyone said they were in show biz, or swinging in the suburbs with the men calling the shots. Then I saw a bisexual support group listed at the Cambridge Women's Center in 1981, and I hung in through the next two ill-fated groups. Finally, in 1983, a couple of us founded the Boston Bisexual Women's Network. We laughed together about the years of being "not quite right."

Q: Which gender person does a bisexual love? A: Any gender she wants.

Q: What does a bisexual woman wear? A: Anything she wants.

Q: What does a bisexual do at night with a lover? A: Anything anyone else does, with the agreement of her partner(s).

So, in the end, what do clothes mean? They can telegraph something, but not necessarily. Today I just dress, like many middle-aged transgender friends, in what I feel like wearing.

*Clothes, continues on next page*



### *Clothes, continued from previous page*

End of story. Oh, I might wear khaki pants with jewelry, or cowboy boots with floor length skirts (along with everyone else). And I often wear only one earring, a tiny signal of androgyny if one is looking for that. Men have fewer options, since a man in a dress sets off way more alarms than a woman in pants.

My former boyfriend felt most powerful and sexy in full 1950's-era sex war regalia: nylons, girdle, lingerie, and cocktail dresses. At work he was just another hippie computer guy, but in his personal life, he could let it all out. Other than his choices of fabrics and colors (magenta polyester? *Please!*), I found him very sexy. In bed, we made it up as we went along. It was a perfect match sexually, after some initial shyness on both our parts until we felt safe. For whether he was a man or a woman in my house and in my bed, I stayed the same. We were both fluid, creative, and real. As with clothing, I stay me no matter what I wear or what I do.

I look back with bemused compassion to my twenties, when new clothing signified a new life and when I thought everyone was looking at me and judging me. Today I know that most people are pretty interested in themselves, and may have a passing opinion of me, but even that is not my business. Today, clothing is a comfort or a toy, and life takes the lead, naked, writing itself day by day.

*Marcia is a cofounder of BBWN who lives, sings, and agitates in Cambridge, MA. Being bisexual is one of the main blessings of her never-mainstream life (see [www.marciadeihl.com](http://www.marciadeihl.com)).*

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### *Restless, continued from p. 1*

Their work day always ran long, often past midnight, and she enjoyed when they took their leave of colleagues and friends together; when they came here.

Her mind filled with the languorous memory of undressing, skin sliding against skin. She grew warm and shifted.

"Mmm," Brenna's voice purred under her chin, vibrating into Cassidy's own chest in her unique way. Small, lightly roughened fingers soothed across her stomach.

Cassidy felt the strange tightness in her chest ease, unaware until it was leaving that her lower back had been taut and aching.

Brenna's fingertips slowly circled. Cassidy felt her skin tingle and muscles flex and relax in the wake of the movement.

"Mmm," she felt herself murmur, the sound rolling up and out of her, along with the nameless, numberless tensions of the day.

Elusive sleep claimed her as she felt warm breath, then soft lips fairy brush against her cheek.

Brenna shifted close, and at last, the night, and Cassidy's mind, lay still and quiet.

*These characters are from Lara Zielinsky's novel Turning Point, [www.lzfiction.net](http://www.lzfiction.net).*

## Frost Moon, Book One: The SkinDancer series, by Anthony Francis (Bell Bridge Books, 2010)

*Reviewed by Lara Zielinsky*

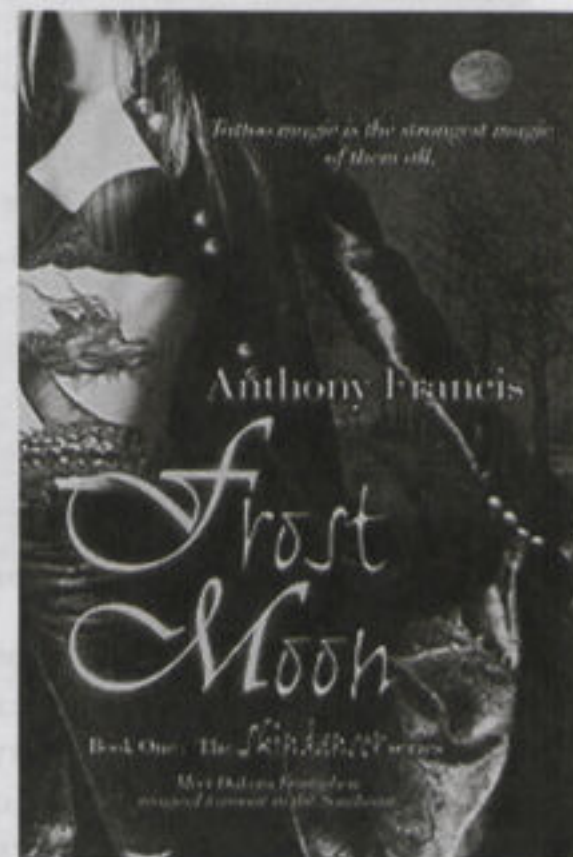
Dakota Frost is the Southeast's most famous magical tattoo artist. Also a Skin Dancer, she can make the tattoos on her body writhe and even do magical battle. When old friends of her father's on the Atlanta P.D. and federal investigators from the Department of Extraordinary Investigations ask her to help them track down a serial killer who cuts tattoos off his victims, she plunges into dangerous intrigues among Atlanta's Edgeworld citizens: shapeshifters, vampires, witches, and others.

*De rigueur* for this genre of paranormal stories, who and what is in Edgeworld is generally known to the primary world. And largely the two try not to interfere with one another.

Dakota moves easily and familiarly in both worlds, knowing and known to the power structures of both. In an almost obvious parallel, she identifies as bisexual, easily shifting between her attractions to men and women. And in another idealism, both her past and present love interests have no problems with it either. But this novel is not about her sexuality.

Dakota's real uniqueness lies in her magical art of tattooing. This sets her up as an instant rival and enemy to some, and an instant commiserant, ally, and friend with others. When the leader of Edgeworld, Lord Buckhead – a shapeshifting stag – summons Dakota to test her abilities because she's been asked to ink a werewolf before the next full moon, the challenge is met with all the skin-tingling detail one could imagine, tattoos that move and even battle each other, transferring from one person to another, skin rippling. The magic escalates.

A magician also challenges Dakota, but where the contest with Lord Buckhead is filled with powerful descriptions of uplifting magic, the duel with the magician is the complete opposite with its dark malevolent presentation.



*Frost Moon, continues on next page*



# My Bodies

By Rooster Girl

As a fluid/bi trans person, I obsess about my bodies and their varied desires. My bodies. Are they flesh or are they spirit or are they both? What do they desire and how? Trying to figure out my body in isolation for years was unnecessarily painful when it turns out that my experiences and desires are not uncommon.

While physically I have a male body, psychically I have a female body. I feel breasts and vulva hovering, vibrating, floating over the top of my smooth man's chest and penis. When completely relaxed, I can feel my vagina. I can use masturbation as a sacred ritual to completely inhabit this psychic body. I can alternate between inhabiting my male body and my female body with my subjectivity floating in between the two.

As for my sexualities, the female spirit body mostly desires to be penetrated and dominated by men whereas my male flesh body mostly desires to dominate and penetrate women. I often wonder if this makes me bi or straight? My subjectivity is so fluid that it's hard to say, although I know I desire men, women, trans and others.

I thought I was alone with my experience but I found some community with other trans people who have similar experiences. I then thought that only "trans" people had such fluid experiences of their bodies. But as I explore my sexuality, I am surprised to find that the experience of trans bodies is more common than I thought.

One girl I met did not identify as trans but she felt sometimes like she had a penis. Another woman I know loves

to pleasure men; she feels like she's so good at it because she feels like the penises she handles belong to her – that they are hers. A boy I know loves to pleasure women and feels like their vaginas are his. A book I read on cunnilingus says that the best lovers treat their lovers' vulva as though it was their own. And *The Big Book of Lesbian Sex* talks about how some lesbians feel like their dildo is a physical manifestation of a psychic reality of having a penis.

If it is that common, won't non-trans or cisgendered people start talking about the experience of their bodies and show that many cisgendered people have common trans experiences? Can't we start to take down the barriers and blur the lines between trans- and cis-identified people? Don't bi/pan/fluid identified people have some unique voice or perspective to add to this discussion?

Recently I had the pleasure of being intimate with a woman whom I love. Deep in our intimate wranglings, while laying in her arms, I felt like her body was the physical incarnation of my female body. How many other people – transgendered or cisgendered – have had a similar feeling when being close to the ones they love?

The body seems to me to be a physical container but also a vessel for a magical spirit that does not have a strict fleshly delineation. If we can think of our bodies as spiritual as well as fleshly creations, perhaps we can demystify and demarginalize the trans experience and also become closer to and more respectful of the magnificence of our bodies.

*"Rooster Girl" is the pen name for a Canadian writer, artist, activist, and adventurer in sexuality and gender.*

## Frost Moon, continued from previous page

The author clearly has captured a very real Atlanta – I was familiar with very nearly every landmark and street mentioned in the story – and equally vividly draws Edgeworld. The depth of descriptions of setting are equally matched by the descriptions of the violence and the tattooing preparation and process. The violent descriptions are never given short shrift, including a near-rape attack Dakota suffers from a slighted vampire.

Amid the very real dangers, Dakota also forms very real, and nuanced, relationships. One of the most touching is with a werecat, who cannot transform into human form. One of the most "I know you as well as you know me" relationships is with the blind witch. While Dakota is the most fully fleshed, the author gives enough of the other characters for the reader to gather information about motivations, both those intrinsic to the main plot, and those that are simply personal goals, and give these supporting characters both emotional and physical roundness.

While it is clear one or two of the subplots for these secondary supporters are convenient to chasten or hasten the central plot, each is presented with enough detail and forethought to make the reader forgive the occasionally obvious turns.

Where this novel excels most thoroughly, though, is the immersion in detail. Balancing gritty physical violence and surreal magic battles can be troublesome. First-time authors, particularly, can tilt more toward one kind of scene or the other. In this tale, Anthony Francis find the balance and keeps the energy taut and believable. *Frost Moon* will fully immerse the reader in its depth.

*Lara Zielinsky is a bisexual author and editor, and hosts the "Readings in Lesbian & Bisexual Women's Fiction" radio show, <http://blogtalkradio.com/lara-zielinsky>.*





## War and Curls

*By Lividia I. Violette*

It was made of naps that I couldn't appreciate  
Tangles and split ends.  
Things I used to make it straight were actually weapons of  
coif destruction  
Relaxers, texturizers, hot combs and flat irons  
My tresses, like myself, were stressed but resilient  
The suffering was too much yet, I persisted.  
It was made of a texture that I didn't know how to appreciate  
Dry and unmanageable.  
Fixated in its style but poofy at the slightest signs of moisture in the air  
Humidity was the enemy and I ran from the water  
Images of what I thought was acceptable were thrown away  
It wasn't long, straight, nor in the wind did it sway  
I had to reevaluate my tactics  
No more chemical warfare  
I didn't want to go bald, just wanted nice hair  
Research-educating myself-was the best strategy  
It is made of curls that I love to appreciate  
Twists and spirals au naturel  
Learned to moisturize, play gently and to let it be itself  
Dancing in the rain and laughing at humidity levels  
Never again fooled by the "You'd look best like this" scam  
I made peace with my locks and the curly-head that I am

*Lividia is a 24-year-old activist from Arlington, Texas who rocks the mission of equality.*





## Palimpsest by Catherynne M. Valente (Bantam Spectra, 2009)

Reviewed by Debbie Block-Schwenk

*"From every terrace and corner grin gargoyles through which old rainwater spurts in sprays and splashes, only to be caught in long pools at the base of each tower. The little faces are mice and hedgehogs and opossums, foxes and rats and blind, nosing moles. Their faces contort as all gargoyles do, peering from within curling stone leaves, licking sharp teeth, but their faces seem so sweet and dear to her, she laughs in the middle of the street, and they grin wider on their heights."* (pg 130)

The author, Catherynne Valente, is a poet and a folklorist (as well as a novelist). Both aspects of her background are obvious in this gorgeous and intense fantasy novel about four strangers, the urge to belong, and a magical city called Palimpsest.

A palimpsest is "a manuscript, typically of papyrus or parchment, that has been written on more than once, with the earlier writing incompletely erased and often legible" (dictionary.com). While Palimpsest is the name of the city, all of the major characters in the novel become palimpsests as well – their prior identities partially erased and written over – metaphorically and literally – by the touch of those who have visited the city and who transmit the influence of the city to anyone with whom they are sexual.

Visiting Palimpsest marks the "immigrant" with a tattoo – a black map of a portion of the city magically inked into their skin: While these visits happen in dreams, Palimpsest is not a dream. The city of Palimpsest is just as seductive – and dangerous – as these ancient stories of Faerie which Valente taps into. The trap – and the temptation – is that you can only visit the part of the city on your lover's body. To see more, to go further, you must find a new partner.

*"Together they auditioned men and women, lifting sleeves and hats and skirts to peer at maps so tiny they made Sei's head throb. Yumiko seemed to know what she was looking for, but all the same it was not until two in the morning that she found a nervous, skinny man with scarred cheeks and a scraggly mustache whose hip was scrawled over with a dense map..."* (pg 106).

The novel's four protagonists are Sei, a Japanese railway worker who longs for the trains of Palimpsest; November, a woman who keeps bees in California; Oleg, a locksmith haunted by the sister who died before his birth; and Ludovico, an Italian bookbinder whose wife has left him. Arriving in Palimpsest at the same time, they are bound together, feeling echoes of each others' experiences and gradually reaching out to each other in our world as well.

But there are dangers, both in the toll that living torn between two worlds takes on the characters, and in Palimpsest itself. A war in Palimpsest has scarred the inhabitants of the city, especially the soldiers of the losing side whose bodies were mutilated – their legs or heads replaced with those of animals in order to increase their speed or ferocity. And just like in old fairy tales before modern sensibilities softened them, sometimes sacrifices – brutal and painful, but cathartic – are required. "This is the real world," Palimpsest's matriarch, Casimira, tells November, "Nothing comes without pain and death." (pg 209).

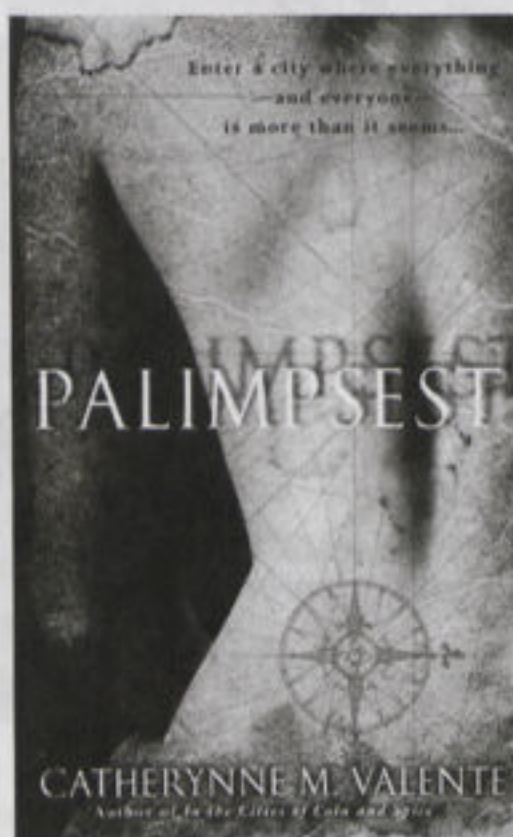
Bisexuality plays a huge part in this novel. All the characters toss aside any consideration of gender in their obsession to find someone marked with a map of Palimpsest to sleep with. But three of the main characters were bisexual before their first visit, and they connect with same-sex partners (for varying periods of time) as they learn about the new world that awaits them in dreams:

*"She kissed her then, and the Golden Pavilion glowed dully behind them. Yumiko slid her hand under Sei's skirt and pressed her fingers against her urgently, furtively. – there was no one around them, but the sun was frosty and white on them, and they were so bare. Sei opened her legs to allow the girl's hand inside her and shut her eyes against the warm air, the red leaves, the silver temple. She could not draw breath for the taste of saffron and run in Yumiko's mouth..."* (pg 44).

November also finds a connection in Palimpsest, through their shared love of bees, with Casimira, whose bees and bugs and vermin provide her with eyes and ears throughout the city. These two women were the strongest characters in the book, and the others' journeys were catalyzed by this relationship. Even this connection, though, is tinged with a brutality that might offend some readers.

If you like your fairy tales with a thread of darkness; if you are willing to imagine that sometimes our bodies are just portals to other worlds; if you allow the lush flow of the prose to seduce you, even if that seduction has a bite, then *Palimpsest* will provide you with a multitude of pleasures.

*Debbie is a long-time Bi Women contributor whose first stop in the bookstore is always the sci-fantasy section.*





# BECAUSE It's Time (for a lot of things)

By Amanda Morgan

I had the pleasure of attending (and participating in) this year's BECAUSE conference, a two-day long experience "for bi, pan, fluid, queer, trans, non-monosexual, questioning and all others, regardless of sexual or gender identity" held April 16-18, 2010 on the campus of Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. The conference featured keynote speeches by Amy André and Beth Zemsky, 20 workshops, a cabaret show, a plenary panel, and more.

My experience of the conference began on Saturday morning with "Queering Our Identities." This workshop, led by Kim Jorgensen, Monica Saralampi and Steph Wilencheck, resulted in an intense and engaging dialogue about what queerness is – not just in terms of our sexual orientations, but what it means to queer our spaces, politics, relationships, art and jobs. Folks raised challenging questions concerning who gets to be queer and why, issues relevant to my work with youth with various and different types of literacies. Those of us in the academy have worked hard to see ourselves validated through queer and cultural studies and while these disciplines are important, at what point do they isolate the majority of the people about whom and for whom these studies were created? Simply put, someone shouldn't have to go to college in order to be queer or understand what that means. To quote recording artist Erykah Badu: "What good do your words do if they can't understand you?" Inasmuch as being queer is also about subverting established sexual power hierarchies and recognizing and confronting privilege, we have a responsibility to not recreate hierarchies of privilege based on levels or types of education.

The second workshop I attended was "Sexual Health and Prevention: Working with healthcare providers as your own patient advocate," led by Maureen Murphy-Ryan, a bisexual woman and a medical student at the Mayo Clinic of Medicine. (Murphy-Ryan, an LGBT activist since her undergraduate studies at Duke University, was awarded the Bisexual Organizing Project's 2010 Community Recognition Award for her work promoting bisexual and non-monosexual inclusion by writing a bisexual-inclusive LGBT section for the Mayo Medical School Handbook and for continuously challenging her professors as well as fellow students when issues of biphobia arise.) During the workshop, she showed us an exercise given to students at Mayo which was written in such a way as to infer that the patient had contracted HIV *because* her husband was bisexual. Murphy-Ryan addressed this and the exercise was re-written. Unfortunately, as many of us are painfully aware, there are still few healthcare providers who understand the difference between identity and behavior. There were plenty of biphobic and transphobic anecdotes to go around. We explored different methods of interacting

with and interrupting health care providers when they make assumptions and Murphy-Ryan left us with a packet of resources for bisexual and transgender folks, many of which are available online. If you have a question or would like links to these resources, she can be reached at [murphyryan.maureen@mayo.edu](mailto:murphyryan.maureen@mayo.edu).

The last workshop I attended, "Exploring Intersections Between Bi and Trans Identities and Organizing" was very exciting for me as a genderqueer bi person who spends the majority of my time in trans spaces. It was co-facilitated by Lauren Beach, chairperson of the Bisexual Organizing Project and member of the BECAUSE organizing committee, and Alex Iantaffi, a psychotherapist and editor-in-chief for the *Journal of Sexual and Relationship Therapy*. I was especially interested to hear what Alex had to say as a bi-identified transmasculine queer person. An issue that arose throughout the conference – and that often comes up in conversation in my own life – is whether the label 'bisexual' is harmful or invalidating to trans identity. Iantaffi's experience mirrored my own in that ze has had a very positive experience in the bi community and felt that the label bisexual was important to hir. Beach passionately addressed what she calls "passing privilege" versus "passing oppression." Bi people are often accused of accessing or having greater access to privilege based upon the supposed ease we have of passing for straight. Beach asserts that a passing oppression is a better term and way of thinking around having identities erased in this manner. To begin this discussion, Beach had us complete a self-assessment, wherein we had to fill in our identifications versus how we believe we are seen according to North American binaries in four locations (classroom/workplace, where we live, with friends, in volunteer activities/communities of worship) This exercise was emotional for me as a genderqueer mixed-race person with multiple-gender attractions – it really brought home the fact that I feel that I am rarely seen by others the way I see myself. While I acknowledge that when I am walking home late with my transmale partner and we are misread as straight we might be more "safe" if no one looks at us too closely – in most instances this hardly feels like a privilege and is definitely more aptly described as a passing oppression.

Saturday's conference programming wrapped up with a plenary panel on which I spoke with other activists: Amy Andre, leading expert on bisexual identity and LGBT health and Executive Director of San Francisco Pride; Scott Bartell, longtime bi activist, psychotherapist and founder of the Twin Cities Sex Positive Society; Ryan Li Dahlstrom, a mixed-race Asian American genderqueer-identified community organizer and activist who works as the Director of the Trans Youth Support Network; and our very own Robyn Ochs. The panel was moderated by Claire Chang of the Minnesota Community Foundation and The Saint Paul Foundation and a leader in addressing racism in Minnesota in a variety of ways including as supervisor of the Facing Race Initiative

BECAUSE, continues next page



BECAUSE, *continued from previous page*

at The Saint Paul Foundation.

This panel, "It's Time: Perspectives on Bisexuality: Past, Present and Future" was the best one I have had the privilege of participating in. Each panelist brought a richness of experience in terms of identity and activist communities that continued to fuel this discussion of intersectionality and what exactly our issues are as non-monosexual people. Dalhstrom and I were both most interested in working within people of color, trans and youth communities while working towards sexual and gender liberation. Bartell pointed out that while he started a men's group in 1975, he wouldn't do the same thing today in 2010. We addressed different issues we could organize around as members of multiple communities, but even this can be problematic in instances where goals may be similar (keeping our communities safe) and methods may differ (engaging police/increased legislation vs. finding ways to be safe outside the system as communities of color and trans communities are frequently re-victimized by law enforcement). Another question that was raised: whether bisexuality shows sexual orientation is a choice and therefore interrupts the L/G movement for equality – is further proof that we should be moving towards a politics of sexual and gender liberation. The notion that our rights as human beings are only merited if "we just can't help ourselves, we're born this way, who would choose this?" etc., is predicated on a sex-negative belief that we are only queer because we have no other options. I don't know exactly how I came to be blessed with feeling attracted to so many people of varying bodies and genders but whenever anyone asks "Who would choose this?" I just want to shout, "I would! And I do!" So rather than seeing non-monosexual people as a liability to the LGBT movement, I see us as an asset in the direction I hope we're moving towards.

If you're able, I hope you'll consider attending BECAUSE 2011. Because it's nourishing. Because it's good.

*Amanda Morgan lives in New York City.*

## News Briefs



There has been an unusual number of bi-related news stories of late. Many have been positive portrayals of bi communities and individuals, while others remain more controversial. Here are some highlights that have received attention from mainstream media:

**Rapper Nicki Minaj** is coming out with more than her debut album: she has, in a recent interview, come out as bisexual. She acknowledges the homo/biphobia that permeates the hip-hop industry, while saying she is optimistic about the future. She believes it won't be too long before more hip-hop artists are able to publicly identify as other-than-straight.

In other pop culture news, singer **Lady GaGa** came out as bisexual, saying her hit song "Poker face" was about bisexuality. She openly self-identifies as both "boy-crazy" and "girl-crazy," despite not having much time in her life for relationships now. Her lyrics suggest that her "poker face" allows her to be with a man while fantasizing about a woman, and she appears to be quite comfortable discussing her sexuality, which her fan base greatly appreciates and admires.

Black Eyed Peas singer **Fergie** has been open about her own bisexuality, but it recently made headlines again due to her newlywed status, and the subsequent analysis of her orientation on *The View*. Unfortunately, the ladies of *The View* spent time discussing ideas of "cheating" more than anything else, and seemed to promote the notion that bisexuality and infidelity go hand-in-hand.

And actress **Anna Paquin** whose credits include *The Piano* (1993), and who is currently co-starring in HBO's "True Blood" vampire series, came out while taping a public service announcement for the True Colors Fund, an advocacy group dedicated to LGBT equality. "I'm Anna Paquin. I'm bisexual, and I give a damn," she says into the camera.

But for a more accurate portrayal, one can catch **Bi-Licious**, a show by, for, and about bisexuals, and a part of the National Queer Arts Festival. Bisexual comedy, history, music, film, dance, and poetry are followed by a panel discussion with the performers. The show takes place June 4 at San Francisco's LGBT Center. More information can be found at [www.biliciousproductions.com](http://www.biliciousproductions.com).

And speaking of bi visibility, where was it at the GLAAD awards? No one discussed or mentioned bisexuality, including celebrities like Wanda Sykes who previously identified as bisexual. The only real nod to bi folks during the event was from Adam Lambert, who said, "We need to celebrate diversity within the gay and lesbian community, too."

Finally, three bisexual men from the San Francisco area have filed a lawsuit claiming they were discriminated against during the Gay Softball World Series in the Seattle area two years ago, in violation of Washington state laws barring discrimination. The three men allege that after another team complained, the alliance ruled the three men were "nongay," and took away the team's second-place finish. Apparently, the alliance has no category or definition for bisexual or transgender people in its rules. The National Center for Lesbian Rights is representing the three men.

*Many of these stories, and much more, can be found at the Bisexual Examiner website: [www.examiner.com/x-3366-Bisexuality-Examiner](http://www.examiner.com/x-3366-Bisexuality-Examiner).*



## Calendar, continued from p. 16

**40 Years of Progress.** Kicking off from the South End on Tremont Street, the parade will wind its way down Tremont, up Beacon Street and down the other side of Beacon Hill into Government Center. This year we will have the **first bi float** as we celebrate the **BRC's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary!** We will post the exact place to meet up by email and on the Facebook page. Join the BRC Yahoo group (biresourcecenter) to make sure you get the email. We'll provide coffee and bottles of water for everyone riding on the float and marching alongside. Want to find out how you can get involved with the float or the booth at the Pride Festival? Email [brc@biresource.net](mailto:brc@biresource.net) to get involved.

**Sunday, June 13, Heat on the Street: Perkins Street Block Party,** noon-7 pm in Jamaica Plain. Dance at the hottest women's block party the day after Pride. More deets: [www.bostonpride.org/jpbp.php](http://www.bostonpride.org/jpbp.php).

**Thursday, June 17, 7 pm, Nachos & Noshing.** Join BLiSS to share some of the best vegetarian nachos in Boston, or other delicious snacks to nosh on, at the Other Side Cafe, 407 Newbury St. in Boston. RSVP to Linda: [bliss@biresource.net](mailto:bliss@biresource.net).

**Saturday, June 19, 11:30 am, Bi Brunch.** Bi Brunch (a mixed gender bi group) is now always the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq. in Somerville. (Across the street from the Davis T stop).

**Saturday, June 26, Noon, Bi & Bi-Allies Bike Ride.** Join us for a safe, fun, leisurely bike ride, starting and ending in Davis Square. Our route should be between 10 and 15 easy (flat!) miles, and promises to be mostly on bike paths. We plan to meet up in front of the Davis Square T-station at noon. Please bring your helmet and some water. There's the possibility of refreshments after the

ride at Red Bones or another local establishment. Please RSVP to Dave and Arthur: [bliss@biresource.net](mailto:bliss@biresource.net).

## JULY

**Wednesday, July 7, 6:30-9 pm, BLiSS,** Bisexual Resource Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. (See June 2<sup>nd</sup>)

**Tuesday, July 13, 7-9 pm, BRC Board Meeting.** (See June 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Monday, July 14, 7 pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See June 7<sup>th</sup>)

**Thursday, July 15, 7 pm, BLiSS.** (See June 2<sup>nd</sup>)

**Saturday, July 17, 11:30 am, Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See June 19<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, July 25, noon, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Denise's in Marlborough.** Please bring a potluck dish and/or drinks to share. Contact Denise at 508-481-1916 or [dgarrow@verizon.net](mailto:dgarrow@verizon.net) to RSVP or get directions. If you want a ride from the Boston area let Denise know and she can see if others are coming from your area. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

## AUGUST

**Wednesday, August 4, 7 pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS).** (See June 2<sup>nd</sup>)



**Monday, August 9, 7 pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See June 7<sup>th</sup>)

**Tuesday, August 10, 7-9 pm, BRC Board Meeting.** (See June 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, August 15, noon, BBWN Annual Potluck Brunch and Book Swap at Ellyn's in Somerville.** Please bring a potluck dish and/or drinks to share. Bring a few books to swap with others (not required to attend the brunch) and take home a few for your summer reading. Contact Ellyn: [nellythrustmor@comcast.net](mailto:nellythrustmor@comcast.net) for directions and to let her know you'll be attending. This is a great tradition and gets a wonderful book-loving crowd.

**Saturday, August 21, 11:30 am, Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See June 19<sup>th</sup>)

**August 15-21, Carnival Week in Provincetown.** A week of festive activities including Drag Bingo, the absolutely fabulous Carnival Parade on Thursday, and much more. Bring your beads, bathing suit, and sunscreen! More info at [www.ptown.org/Carnival.asp](http://www.ptown.org/Carnival.asp).

**Thursday, August 20, 7 pm, BLiSS.** (See June 2<sup>nd</sup>)

## Regional Pride Dates!

**Connecticut: Saturday, June 5, Bushnell Park, Hartford.** [www.connecticutpride.org](http://www.connecticutpride.org)

**Boston's Dyke March: Friday, June 11, [www.bostondykemarch.com](http://www.bostondykemarch.com)**

**Boston: Saturday, June 12, Boston, [www.bostonpride.org](http://www.bostonpride.org)**

**Southern Maine: Saturday, June 19, Portland, [www.southernmainepride.org](http://www.southernmainepride.org)**

**Rhode Island: Saturday, June 19, Providence, [www.prideri.com](http://www.prideri.com)**



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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

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### Ongoing Events

#### Last Fridays:

**Bi Women's Rap.** 7:30-9pm at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

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#### 2nd Mondays:

**Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** 7pm. Email [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com) for more info.

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#### 1st Wednesdays, 3rd Thursdays:

**BLISS: Biseuxal Support & Social Group,** 7-8:45pm. Meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

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#### 3rd Saturdays:

**Biversity Bi Brunch,** 11:30am at Johnny D's, Davis Square, Somerville.

*Sign up for our new email list!*

*Send an email to: [biwomenboston-subscribe](mailto:biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)*

*@yahoogroups.com*



## Ask not what Bi Women can do for you ...

Help us send *Bi Women* to you, to other women, and also to community centers, youth and campus LGBT groups. Think of the support that *Bi Women* has provided to you, and give generously because your contribution will indeed make a difference in many, many lives. It will only take a minute and you will make a difference.

It costs \$5000 to keep *Bi Women* and BBWN going for one year. No donation is too small (and none too large).

Make your checks payable to BBWN, PO Box 301727, Jamaica Plain MA 02130. Or you can donate online via paypal to [biwomenboston@gmail.com](mailto:biwomenboston@gmail.com). For more information, visit our website: [biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).

# CALENDAR

## JUNE

**Wednesday, June 2, 7-8:45 pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLISS).** Meets on the 1st Wednesday and 3rd Thursday of each month at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations are welcome. 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday meetings are peer facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. For the summer months, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday meetings will be held at local restaurants. See the individual dates for details or check [biresource.net](http://biresource.net) for updates.

**Saturday, June 5, 3 pm, Scenic Walk in the Mt Auburn Cemetery.** Join the BLISS Group and Biversity Boston for a walk through historic Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge. Flowers will be blooming and the tower provides city views. Wear comfortable walking shoes and bring water. Take bus #71 or 73, or park free in the cemetery on any road WITHOUT a green line. Meet at 3 pm at the shelter at the main entrance, on Mt. Auburn Street. Heavy rain cancels. No pets. For more info on the cemetery, see [www.mountauburn.org](http://www.mountauburn.org). RSVP to Lucy at [bliss@biresourcenet](mailto:bliss@biresourcenet).

**Sunday, June 6, AIDS Walk Boston.** The 6.2-mile AIDS Walk starts at the Hatch Shell at 7:30 am in Boston's Back Bay. The Walk raises money and awareness for HIV prevention, advocacy and service. Info: [www.aac.org](http://www.aac.org).

**Monday, June 7, 7 pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** A peer led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. If interested in attending, contact [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com). Meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mondays.

**Tuesday, June 8, 7:00-9:00 pm, Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting.** All bi and bi-friendly community members welcome to attend. Email Ellyn at [brc@biresource.net](mailto:brc@biresource.net) for more info. At the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. near Back Bay station on the Orange Line.

**Friday, June 11, 6:00 pm, Boston's Dyke March.** Gather at the Boston Common Gazebo at 6:00 for a night of frolicking and marching with the queerest women in town.

**Saturday, June 12, Pride Day in Boston.** The theme this year is *Riots to Rights: Celebrating*

**Calendar** continues on page 15



# Bi Women

Fall 2010: Sep/Oct/Nov  
Vol. 28 No. 4 • Bi & Single

A newsletter produced by the Boston Bisexual Women's Network, for women everywhere

## Dating Sites

By Jen Bonardi

Let's be clear from the start: this perpetually single lady is no stranger to online dating. Girl, I did online dating back when Al Gore taught the Internet to boom. Just out of college, I had precious little dating experience because on campus, it simply wasn't done. You just sort of hooked up and – sometimes – hoped something came of it. (*"You mean the dreaded Hook Up Culture existed in the '90s? Heavens, fetch me my smelling salts!"*)

Out in the real world without a community of peers at my fingertips, I viewed online dating as one arrow in my quiver for finding affection in all its glorious forms. I not only got good at dating through these online adventures, I actually came to enjoy it. I learned everything from taking a chance on people ("Well, she's 4'10" and I'm 5'9"...but she wants to see a movie with me, and we might be soul mates") to determining the worst kind of person to date (i.e. anyone embarrassed by online dating).

Both the Internet and I now have over a decade of online dating experience. Nowadays, with the



Internet literally in your back pocket and linked up to GPS, online dating should really be coming into its own. And it is. Unless, of course, you're bi.

Take OkCupid, one of the most widely used dating websites, partly because it's free. I hadn't used it in years but decided to log on a month ago and found an unsettling new development. In order to get started, you now need to choose your gender, current relationship status, and sexual orientation. Each question provides possible answers in drop-down menus; the one for "orientation" allows you to choose "I'm straight," "I'm gay," or "I'm bisexual."

Any bisexual woman seeking a monogamous relationship knows not to put "bisexual" in a profile when searching for men. It is, for lack of a better word, distracting. In fact, this is why it behooves you to make two separate profiles, and usually on two different sites. A lady may defy this rule in favor of honesty and pride in her identity: rest assured, she'll only make that rookie mistake once.

I chose "I'm bisexual" and received a list of profiles that were mostly straight women or gay men. How was that supposed to work? (When I re-answered the question as "I'm straight," I only received profiles of straight men.) I could then do a Targeted Search

Jen, continues on page 10

## If Flying Solo Is An Art Form, Then My Life is a Masterpiece

By Kanika Ameerah

I confess: I'm single out of complete and utter laziness. To me, dating seems like a chore, and a rather unpleasant one at that. Hitting up the bars and clubs, going to mixers, reading books such as *The Rules* and *He's Just Not That Into You* and doing the online dating thing all seems like one huge ultra-competitive rat race to me and I don't even know what the prize is! For years now, the dating dance has been the last thing on my list of priorities and admittedly, my lax outlook on finding love has put some fear into the hearts of my concerned relatives. After all, I am already in my 30s, my biological clock is ticking and my dating options are dwindling before my very eyes. However, I am not stressed or worried about it. When the right person comes along for me, it will happen. Until then, life goes on.

It would probably be easy to dismiss me as asexual, fearful of intimacy or just plain bitter, but I am none of those things. I am quite fond of a pretty face, have crushes from time to time, and though I've made some past dating

mistakes that caused me an equal amount of headache and heartache, I am still optimistic about finding true love. However, my lust for life trumps any innate desire I might have to find "the one." With age, I find that it's a joy and a pleasure to be single, as it allows me the opportunity to explore life in ways that I could not if I were married or had a family.

For example, while many people are afraid to go on trips by themselves, I've always preferred to travel solo. In fact, I've become so used to traveling alone that when I travel with others, I find myself getting annoyed with them after a while. Over the years, I've gone on small trips throughout North America and last year, I fulfilled my dream of seeing Europe (eight countries in all). I have met many amazing people and wandered through places that I wouldn't have dared if I were accompanied by another. I experienced all sorts of *faux-pas* and misadventures along the way as well as extremely pleasant moments. I have more postcards and magnets than I can count!

When not on the road, I keep myself busy with a variety of activities, whether barhopping in the streets of New

Kanika, continues on page 10





## HONOR ROLL

Justin Adkins  
Michael Alejandro  
Jessie Belben  
Katelynn Bishop  
Jen Bonardi  
Katrina Chaves  
Erika  
Fennel  
Fernanda Ferreira  
Shelley Jameson  
Linda McMahan  
Nasim Memon  
Deborah Niles  
Robyn Ochs  
Rosa  
Sarah Rowley  
Ellyn Ruthstrom  
Toni T  
Jennifer Taub  
Laurie Wolfe  
Gail Zacharias

And many more  
fabulous people!  
You know who  
you are!

*Bi Women* is  
published quarterly.

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authors and artists.

## From your editor

The theme of this issue is "Bi and Single." I'm pleased to say that submissions came pouring in! Jen Bonardi offers a bi perspective on dating sites. Fennel and Dillan DiGiovanni offer tips for single folks. Kanika Ameerah, Kitty Kavanagh and The B Word Poet offer personal perspectives on being single, and there's even one by me. (No, I'm not single.)

And we have three articles about bi activism: Amy Andre writes about being the out bi Executive Director of San Francisco Pride; Apphia K. recounts her experiences as the first out bi speaker at Mumbai, India's pride celebration; and Faith Cheltenham writes about representing the bi community as an invited guest at the White House. Katrina Chaves provides us with some more bi news, and Ellyn Ruthstrom lets us know about upcoming activities of interest to bi folks in and around Boston.

**You will notice in the calendar that the Bisexual Resource Center and Bilicious are teaming up to bring us a very special Celebrate Bisexuality Day on September 23rd, and the next BBWN brunches will be on September 19th, October 17th and November 7th.**

In addition to all this, we have poems by Morgan O'Donnell and Jay Ellers, and Marcia Diehl shares with us a letter she wrote to *Bay Windows* in response to their review of *The Kids are All Right*.

And last – but certainly not least – we have two fascinating interviews. For the "Bi Women Around the World" feature, I interview Australian bi activist Holly Hammond. And Ellyn Ruthstrom interviews Denise Garrow-Pruitt, an anchor of our Boston community.

Enjoy this newsletter, and please consider adding your voice and/or artwork to the next issue of *Bi Women*.

– Robyn

## Next in *Bi Women*

The theme for the Winter '11 issue:

### INTERSECTIONS

We are complex individuals with multiple identities. In addition to our sexual orientations, we also have genders, racial and ethnic backgrounds, religious and political perspectives and class privilege or lack thereof. How does your position in one of these classifications affect your experience of another? For example, how did your religious background affect your coming out experience? How does your gender identity affect your sexual orientation? What unique spin does your ethnic background give to your sexual orientation? Start writing!

**Submissions for the next issue must be received by November 5th.**

Send your submissions and suggestions for future topics to  
[biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)

Upcoming themes may include:

Fantasy; Choice; Out at Work;  
Faith & Religion; more...

If you do not want your name published, or wish to use a pseudonym, just let us know.

***Bi Women* is online at  
[biwomenboston.org](http://biwomenboston.org).**

BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Want to host one of our monthly brunches, be the woman who coordinates the brunches, help out with our website (we use WordPress)? Or, if you're a student, consider an internship. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Robyn ([biwomeneditor@gmail.com](mailto:biwomeneditor@gmail.com)).

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.



# Bis Around the World: Holly Hammond, Canberra, Australia

By Robyn Ochs

*Holly Hammond is a 35-year-old activist who has identified as bi since age 17. She's based in Canberra, Australia's capital city, where she lives with her partner Clare and their tiny dog, Pez. She works as an activist educator with the Change Agency ([www.thechangeagency.org](http://www.thechangeagency.org)) and a labor union organizer.*

**Robyn Ochs:** How do you define bisexuality?

**Holly Hammond:** For me, being bisexual means being sexually attracted to men and women, and pursuing loving partner relationships with people of either sex/gender. As I write this I'm conscious of the limits of language, and the challenge to get beyond the gender binary. I don't mean to imply there are only two biological sexes or only two genders. But the reality of my life is that my partners have been men and women, and I feel attraction to people who identify as male, female, and trans.

**RO:** How – and when – did you come to identify as bisexual?

**HH:** I came out as bisexual when I was 17. I think identity is historically and culturally specific. I was involved in the women's movement, and other kinds of activism, in the last two years of high school. Many of my friends were lesbians and bisexual women. I was involved in ACT-UP, promoting safe sex education and access to materials for high school students. One of the ACT-UP activists was Wayne Roberts, a fantastic bi activist involved in the Australian bisexual network. So there were people around me who made bisexual identity accessible to me, and it was a great fit. To me, being a bi woman meant being in charge of my sexuality, being open to all sorts of experiences, having opportunities to get close to different people, without being constrained by the sexual and gender roles expected of heterosexual women.

**RO:** Why does this identity matter to you?

**HH:** It's part of the truth of who I am. I think it should be visible and available as an identity to anyone who wants it. I like that it's subversive of the hetero/homo binary and of homophobia. I also strongly identify with Queer identity.

**RO:** I had the pleasure of meeting you in July

of 2009 at the International LGBT Human Rights conference in Copenhagen, and I attended an excellent session you organized titled "*The B in LGBTIQ: Bisexuals claiming space in Queer community and social action.*" How did that come about, and what was it like to present at an international LGBT rights conference?

**HH:** It actually followed from presenting a workshop at the first International LGBT Human Rights Conference in Montreal in 2006, which was a great but challenging experience. When I offered my abstract for that conference I was told I'd probably be sharing my workshop with a number of similar presentations, so I went with an expectation of getting to meet awesome bis from around the world. When I arrived for the conference I discovered that mine was the only workshop focused on bisexuality, one workshop out of over 100. I was hit by feelings that will be familiar to many bisexuals: wondering if this was a space for me to be in, how the organizers could let this happen, whether this was going to be yet another time where we're overlooked and disrespected. It was actually a really empowering experience to run that workshop, and I was proud to be staking space for bisexuals, and making us visible. It was also lovely to connect with some awesome intersex activists, and notice our connections as binary-subverting folks.

I actually have a commitment to hold LGBTIQ caucuses at mainstream events, and to make space for bisexuals at LGBTIQ events. This works for me, because it connects me with my people when we're not always visible, and I think it makes events work better for everyone to have this sort of caucus space.

So after Montreal I was keen to hold a workshop at Copenhagen, and I also wrote to other bisexual activists (including you!) to encourage participation. The second conference was a big improvement, with you chairing a plenary, running a great workshop with excerpts from *Getting Bi*, and great work by Danish bis running a number of workshops and a gathering after the conference. With my workshop I wanted to look at this issue of our marginality in Queer spaces. I know I can have a bi chip on my shoulder, thinking it's the responsibility of gays and lesbians to make a space accessible for us, but I also think it's about how we organize and claim our space in those communities.

Besides feeling a bit spun out about being a visible bisexual in queer space, I had feelings about being an Australian presenting at an international conference. Our national identity has a lot of baggage about feeling insignificant on the world stage, of not knowing enough or being important. So it was empowering in lots of ways.

**Holly, continues on next page**





Holly, continued from previous page

**RO:** I remember that you showed a fascinating diagram of your own sexuality journey. Would you briefly describe the workshop, and share the diagram with our readers?

**HH:** I used a few diagrams – one that showed my participation in the Queer community, one that showed my visibility as a bi person, and another that charted my relationships. I think it can be really difficult to talk about bi identity, without sharing our stories and what our bi lives have really been like. I've lived with the situation of being read as a lesbian while in same-sex relationships, and read as a heterosexual woman while I had a male partner. I was most visible as bi when I was single and playing, or in non-monogamous relationships. It's hard work continually coming out, and sometimes it just seems academic to people. One of the things I find frustrating is when people can't handle aspects of me which deviate from their (current) perception of me as lesbian, for example, if I say a guy is hot, or talk about my past unplanned pregnancy.

**RO:** Australia used to be one of the hubs of bi activism. In fact, I keynoted an amazing bi conference in Sydney back in 1998. What's it like today? Are there active bi groups? Is the broader LGBTQIA community inclusive?

**HH:** I remember how dynamic bi activism and community was in the 90s. It doesn't seem that way to me now, but it may be that I'm going to the wrong parties or I've missed these groups somehow! It's interesting, I think I've actually resisted gathering separately with bisexuals, or organizing politically just with bisexuals. Part of this is probably internalized biphobia, but I think it's also because I've always seen our interests as fundamentally aligned with lesbians, gay men, trans, intersex, queer and

gender queer folks of all stripes. So I've tried to stay a part of a broader Queer movement and community, even though that has been really hard at different times, especially when I had a male partner for five years.

**RO:** Last summer I met your lovely partner Clare. How did you meet? How long have you been partnered?

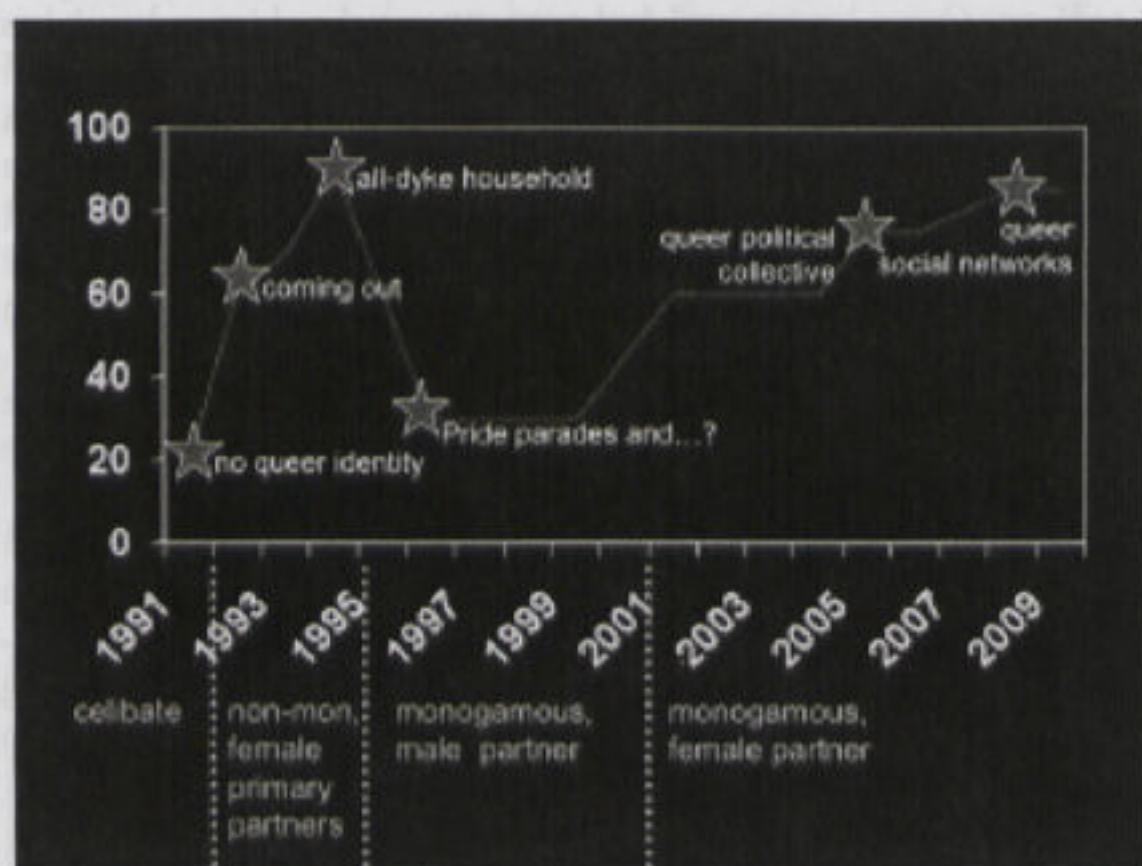
**HH:** I met Clare at primary school when we were both ten! We didn't get together until long after school, when we were both 25. We just celebrated our ninth anniversary. We have a wonderful relationship, and I'm so proud to be with her. She's a lesbian, and a great ally. She notices biphobia and interrupts it. At the Copenhagen workshop she facilitated the gathering of the non-bis, while we had the bi caucus. She shares my commitment to social change, and it's great to feel that we're working together to make the world better.

**RO:** What changes have you seen in understanding and construction of sexualities in Australia over the years you have been out?

**HH:** There has been a lot of change. I think there has been increasing recognition that identity can be fluid. Understandings of gender have changed in huge ways in our communities. Trans identities have become much more visible. I think this has been challenging for bisexual identity – what's all this fuss about being attracted to men and women...what's a man or a woman anyway? Straight society has become more accepting, or titillated by, some level of bisexual activity, so long as the real serious partner relationships are heterosexual. Bisexuality in some way seems more visible and valued in predominantly straight swinger culture, than in queer communities. I don't think (I hope) that people are not being so harshly ostracised within queer communities for having straight sex or desires.

I think there is a gap in understanding actual bisexual identity. That some of us are just as likely to form a relationship with people of the same sex/gender as the opposite. That this identity isn't necessarily about fluidity. I actually think I've been pretty consistent with my attractions! A lot of people still seem to think of sexuality as a linear narrative, so if you've had one relationship with a man, then a relationship with a woman, then the most recent relationship defines your identity. Maybe for some people, but not me.

*Robyn is the editor of the 42-country anthology Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World and of Bi Women.*





# How to Win at the Dating Game

By Dillan DiGiovanni

Most of us who are single date, or want to. Whether you've been "out there" for a while or are just getting started, equip yourself to win at what is often a tough game. Why do some people seem to ace it every time? Dating is often not easy. To circumvent the drama and grief that often accompanies dating, get and stay fit inside and out to present your best self and attract the best possible mates as you survey the landscape of potential partners. Focus on your intent, your attitude, and your own health and watch how things unfold.

## INTENT

Are you dating to satisfy the expectations of your grandmother or parents? To replace a lost love? Do you scour the Internet or clubs or bookstores searching for someone because you think they will complete you?

If so, stop. I mean it.

Dating to meet someone else's expectations or because you feel incomplete without a partner are the wrong reasons. Dating should happen when you feel confident that you want and need to find another person (or people) to love you and help you grow, and you want to offer them the best of your own self in return. If you start out with this as your intention, you will notice how quickly your own attitude and your experience shift in a positive direction. If your own self-esteem and confidence are shaky and you're ambivalent about what you want and need, you will attract someone who has those same qualities. Avoid this by spending a good amount of time assessing why you're considering dating another person. Ask yourself what you want to get out of it, and what you are willing to invest. Be clear about what you are looking for. Read: *If the Buddha Dated* by Charlotte Kasl, PhD.

## ATTITUDE

Once you have (relative) clarity about what you want and need from dating another person, take time to read up on some good books about dating (I said, GOOD ones) or consider talking to a therapist or counselor to align your own motivations and internal health. We all have stuff in our past that might make us feel like we don't have much to offer in a relationship or that we are *too* good to find an appropriate mate. Neither of these is true. Chances are, if you head into a relationship willing to grow and become healthier, you will attract someone with that same intention. Start by being selective about your time and your body. Don't give anyone and everyone access to you. Someone showing interest in you is nice, but check your list of "ideal attributes" and see if the person matches up. If not, move along. Your mental and physical health are extremely precious and you shouldn't compromise them for anyone who brings less than his/her/ per best to the table. When you see the dating process in this light, it may alleviate the anxiety and stress. You are in

the driver's seat. You choose when, where and why you are spending time with someone. Does this sound cocky to you? Selfish? Good. Chances are you haven't spent enough of your life worrying about your own needs. It might sound counterintuitive if you're attempting to create a partnership. My opinion, however, is the more you are taking care of yourself, the better you can take care of someone else. The more you listen to your own needs, the more compassion and empathy you can have for another person's. Good boundaries around self-care and self-esteem can only lead to more harmony in a relationship. Read: *In the Meantime: Finding Yourself and the Love You Want* by Iyanla Van Zant.

## YOUR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Sleep more. Drink more water. Exercise because you love it, not because you pay a monthly membership fee. Journal or talk to good friends often. Sleep more. Eat food that is grown and produced locally for optimal nutrition and for the health of your community. Eat less processed foods full of sugar, salt and the wrong kinds of fat. Drink less alcohol. Stop smoking cigarettes.

Your health and well-being should be in primo shape before entering the dating scene. Meeting new people and being vulnerable with them is hard work. You will have the best success if you're sleeping at least eight hours a day, drinking at least eight glasses of water and eating three balanced meals, for starters. What do you do to connect with others? What is your connection with nature and the world around you? What are your identities? What gives your life meaning? Spend more time answering these questions and improving your health and less time searching for your mate and you will be amazed how quickly that right person finds you. Read: *Heal Your Body* by Louise L. Hay.

To win at the dating game, be clear on your intentions, adjust your attitude about what you want, need and deserve in an intimate relationship and take good care of your mind and body.

*Based in Cambridge, Dillan is a certified wellness coach and graduate of the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. She teaches her clients how to stop second-guessing themselves, start eating better and begin living more intentionally.*



BBWN's April brunch at Steph's.



## Having My Cake and Eating it Too

By Robyn Ochs

Peg and I have been a couple for almost 14 years, so far. During the six years before Peg and I met, I was both single and celibate.

It was the first time I had ever been single – and not looking – for any extended period of time. Prior to this, I had spent my entire adult life pursuing a relationship, in a relationship, or recovering from a relationship.

To my great surprise, I found that I enjoyed being single. And the longer I was single, the more I liked it. I started referring to this state as “being in a relationship with myself.” And what a great relationship it was! I was completely compatible with myself: liking the same food, books, films, and theater, even waking up and going to bed at exactly the same time every night. And being able to make spontaneous plans with friends without having to check in with anyone beforehand. To plan a vacation without having to coordinate schedules. For six years, I lived a life without relationship conflict, doing exactly what I wished with my own free time, never having to compromise. I spent lots of time with my friends. I learned – *really learned* – that I didn’t need a relationship to make me complete. I was happy all by myself.

And then I met Peg. I *really* liked her. I wanted to spend time with her. Lots of time. I wanted to get to know her better. Much better.

But as our relationship began to evolve, I absolutely did not breathe a huge sigh of relief. Instead, I faced a moment of choice. Getting into a new relationship would have its wonderful aspects, but it would also require making some compromises.

I ended up deciding that perhaps I should practice a unique form of non-monogamy. Rather than break up with myself and dedicate myself entirely to Peg, I resolved to figure out a way to be in a relationship with Peg *and* carve out time for myself.

To make a long story short, I’ve managed to do just that. Peg and I give each other more space than many couples. We often “parallel play” at home together: she at her desk, me at mine. And we each pursue interests not shared by the other: Peg has her passion for motorcycling, her trips across the country to work for Kawasaki at motorcycle events, her volunteer work with AIDS and Breast Cancer walks and rides, and yard work. I have my bi and LGBT conferences, partner dancing, and my vegetable garden. We have some friends that are “ours” and we each have our own as well.

I guess I’m just one of those bisexuals who wants to have the best of both worlds, to have my cake and eat it too. Yum.

*Robyn is the editor of Bi Women.*



“Stuff & Stuffs” are events where we enjoy food and each other’s company and also stuff and mail the Bi Women newsletter. At our May Stuff & Stuff, two of our fabulous volunteers apparently became confused. Here they are seen stuffing rice into envelopes. “No, no, no! Let me explain this to you one more time: You put the food into your mouth, and you put the newsletters into the envelopes!” In retrospect, it’s a good thing we didn’t serve soup.

## Adult Drinks

By Morgan O'Donnell

It was supposed to be coffee, friendly,  
just a chat between colleagues, club members.  
Then she shifted the universe, altered reality,  
asking about adult drinks instead.

The message on my screen dared conspire.  
Her words “adult drinks” emblazoned on my mind  
and I knew I was flirting with fire.  
Too late, too soon, her call stirred that murky water.

My alter ego sleeping just beneath the surface  
tempted by fate, the taste of the sea,  
emerged, dripping like a newborn goddess  
remembering how to fall into sky blue eyes.

An ordinary conversation, an extraordinary conversation.  
Her breath filled the space between us at the pub  
that space in which battles are fought, lost and won.  
Another paradise waiting in the wings, waiting to fall.

Between glasses filled with ambrosia and honey  
I heard the whisper of possibility,  
a lifetime of listening to rhythm and meter  
waiting for that unstressed syllable – the feminine caesura.

*Morgan’s musings on nature, poetry, writing, and the search for a sustainable life can be found at Red Raven Circling: [redravencircle.wordpress.com](http://redravencircle.wordpress.com).*



# Embracing Being Single (even when it's not your first choice, and you hope it's not a permanent state)

By Fennel

Recently a friend and I were chatting about how it feels to be single and how hard it is to find a serious relationship. We discussed how this might be due in part to living on the East Coast, in part to age and in part that it's simply hard to find a good match. Then I brought up Woody Allen's famous quote about bisexuality, "Bisexuality immediately doubles your chances for a date on Saturday night." As cute as this joke is (not withstanding how much I loathe Woody Allen's lack of ethics/morals), it's really not true. In fact, there is still a lot of bias against bisexuals.

But my intention and motivation for writing this article is quite the opposite of a negative rant—and I'll tell you why: I believe in being positive and trying to find the good in a situation. You may be single now, and not happy about it. If you want a great partner, then I hope you'll find one and be treated well. But if being single is where you find yourself now, try to embrace the good in it.

The idea of "becoming a friend to yourself" (as a Buddhist teacher once told me) and being able to be with yourself and create your life can apply to all of us, single or coupled, regardless of labels of gender and sexual identity.

Although there are some definite benefits to being single, some of my friends and I would like to be partnered, but only if it is a "good enough" fit.

In the meantime, if you'd like to explore some great books on positive approaches to being single, I have a few recommendations:

\* Lauren Mackler, *Solemate: Master the Art of Aloneness and Transform Your Life*

\* Florence Falk, *On My Own: the Art of Being a Woman Alone*

\* E. Kay Trimberger, *The New Single Woman*

\* Marcelle Clements, *The Improvised Woman: Single Women Reinventing Single Life*

Best Wishes on your journey—may it be filled with loving friends who support each other on their paths!

*Fennel has lived in Boston for 20 years. She puts up with the cold winters and the Boston accents because she loves her friends and being close to beautiful nature, and the urban good stuff this city offers.*

## How To Get Me....

By The B Word Poet

An alternative press love advisor got a question from a woman who had a boyfriend but wanted a female lover to join them. In many groups and on websites there are countless couples looking for female lovers. Sites like BisexualPlayground.com and Bisexual.com set up their registration format for couples. What those couples don't understand is that a great percentage of bisexual women don't want to be human couple-sex-toy-aides. Before I began to explore polyamory, couples approached me – which was a huge turn off. Just because I told them I am bisexual didn't mean I wanted to hop in the sack with both of them. I was looking for a monogamous partnership at that time in my life. I wanted what I wanted at that time, and couples needed to respect my boundaries. I've heard from friends that they have been approached by couples at a gay club. Those couples are just not going to find the one they're looking for. Some lesbians go to clubs with their friends and are just simply there to party. Lesbians won't be open to women with male partners and even solo bisexual women are not always welcome in lesbian settings. You'll find bisexual women in straight clubs, but they are the bisexual women who are attached to men or only sexually interested in other women.

Couples tend to bombard women who have never been in a threesome before. While "turning someone out" may have a strong appeal, it's best to stick with women who identify as bisexual and polyamorous. It's not every girl's fantasy to be a couple's sexual outlet – no matter how much these couples want that to be the case.

Feeling helpless right now? Thinking you're never going to find that third party unless you can convince one of the types above? Don't be discouraged. Here are some suggestions about what I'd want: 1) Leave the search completely up to the woman. 2) Don't let your fear of getting rejected or hurt lead you to lie to me or lead me on. Got a man or a husband? So what? Set up dates between the three of us and let's be friends first. Don't rush the sex. 3) Couples that are proud of their sexuality and generally want me to be part of their lives outside as well as inside the bedroom. If these three things are in place, I'll be a lot more open to taking things further. I don't speak for all bisexual women – this is just how to get me.

*The B Word Poet is a 29-year-old bisexual writer and activist in Cleveland, Ohio. [www.shewrites.com/profile/TheBWordPoet](http://www.shewrites.com/profile/TheBWordPoet).*



## The Bisexual Resource Center celebrates 25 years!



We had our first-ever float in Boston's LGBT Pride Parade. It was an amazing day and we received much applause from onlookers. Thanks to the amazing people who worked on this, including: Ellyn, Carla, Jen, Steph, Linda and a host of volunteers who showed up the day before Pride to decorate the float, and to Woody & Vanessa for loaning us their boat.



## Dancing Dragon Flames Reborn

By Jay Bookworm

Divinity: from which all things come and to which they return  
 Dance: matter and spirit mingle and begin to flow in motion  
 Dream: the cohesion of ideas into a multifaceted vision  
 Desire: sharing and honoring the circle of life in community  
 Darkness: the place of growth, beyond fear to love.  
 Behold the beloved woman I call the great dragon goddess, born of fire.  
 She is the empress of the morning and the evening star whose name is of a holy place.  
 A dancing dragon transformed by the shedding of skin and spreading of wings,  
 She invents new ways to be a flame thrower, engaging in covert combat.  
 Her revelry is revealing. Each cue connected to choreography of challenges.  
 All acts of love and pleasure are her rituals. Crush: weighty word: best blessing, worst curse.  
 She breathes dragon's fire, but my fearful pain will not dispel my love. Blessed be.  
 Once upon a time, said the dragon-hunting hero, the dragon and dame morphed into one being!  
 As the hero, I embrace her scales, as the surprisingly tender texture of her sensual beauty,  
 And her flaming words, as the illuminating, fierce tenderness of her visionary voice.  
 In guiding me to a more balanced knowledge, I grow as I glow and glow as I grow.  
 My heart says: Go if you must, but I hope you will stay.  
 Crush: a lightning bolt to the heart, lightening my loneliness,  
 A stylized fireball that shape-shifts within the volcano of my consciousness.  
 Smoldering, like the slow flow of lava from the heavens that sent my divinely inspired desire.  
 As above, so below, and how often I have wanted to go down, to touch upon her earth.  
 With no words to weigh down my tongue and with no thoughts or fears to keep me silent.  
 If I could dance as she does, then I could express my love in a language she speaks fluently.  
 I say now, "as you wish my lady", despite her persistent scorn and unjust accusations.  
 Crush: weighty word: best blessing, worst curse.  
 My body stutters, but my dream spirit soars as we fly together, like in Avatar.  
 Our bond can be wordless love. Even in her willful blindness, I still see her.  
 Patience with illusions, hers, mine and ours, distinctions within temporary technicalities.  
 Symbolically scorched and smoky, bathing in her fiery breath,  
 I declare "may she never hunger nor thirst" consuming flesh and blood of service and devotion.  
 Transfixed and transformed via my bodily, soulful offering for the love feast,  
 I realize we protect and sculpt the same energy in myriad melds of creativity.  
 Heartbreak, force within form, provides release from pressure of separation.  
 Post-volcanic eruption, sacred androgyne, bridal chamber, unified self emerges enlightened.  
 Darkness: where enlightenment is first sensed in solitude  
 Desire: the creative will emerges in art, poetry, music and dance  
 Dream: the flame manifests in the mouths of all who are transformed  
 Dance: healing poetry in motion, emerging from the shadows, slowly.  
 Divinity: the body-mind-spirit energy passed from one to another.  
 Though she breathes dragon's fire, we dance within the flames together. Blessed be.

*Jay Bookworm, a gender queer, differently abled, pagan poet performing and volunteering in the Dallas area, wrote this poem in honor of a bisexual woman, whose creative dedication inspires the communities that she serves.*





"Hearts, not parts." A participant in the bi contingent at London's Parade 2010

## Marcia Deihl has an activist moment...

Marcia shared a letter with us that she sent to *Bay Windows*:

Dear Bay Windows:

*Chris Azzopardi's informative review of the film "The Kids Are All Right" made me even more eager to see it. But about halfway through, I sat bolt upright in my chair.*

*Here we have a film with two lesbians, one of whom apparently has sex with (I won't say "falls in love with" but I would think it would involve mutual attraction) a man. The words "lesbian" and "gay" are used multiple times, but this relationship, regardless of the labels its lovers choose to use, is . . . oh, there's a word somewhere that means non-binary, neither gay nor straight, or both gay and straight. Hmmm . . . don't tell me, it's coming . . . oh! I know! It's right in your masthead. It's "bisexual." Yeah. Bisexual! What a nuanced word. I think I'll use it when it fits. And so should Bay Windows.*

Sincerely,  
Marcia Deihl  
Co-Founder, Boston Bisexual Women's Network

## Marriage Material

By Kitty Kavanaugh

*I put my lips to hers and taste her  
sweet and salty centre.  
Only a moment's pleasure, knowing I will  
never trust a woman with my heart...*

I used to think if my significant relationship ever dissolved for whatever reason, my next relationship would be with a woman. When I'm looking for a partner, I am usually looking for someone I want to spend the rest of my life with and, hopefully, one day marry. It may seem silly, but I know within the first week of dating a person if this is someone I could see myself spending the rest of my life with. I have spent most of my adult life thinking about what kind of relationship I would like to establish and what kind of person would best compliment my personality. And, until recently, I have never considered such a relationship with a woman. I say "person," but when I honestly seek out a life partner, I'm looking for a *man*. I'm looking for those preconceived social norms; someone who is a provider, a protector, strong and disciplined. *But can't a woman be all these things too?*

From women, I seek a type of companionship I cannot so easily establish with a man. I am a Leo with strong masculine energies, and I have the need and desire to put on my "man pants" and be a woman's provider, her protector, guard her, discipline her, and give her strength in her character. It's not that I don't do any of these things for men, but I need to receive these things much more often than I give them. Though I can be that dominant masculine energy in a relationship, I would find it too exhausting to keep up the pretense, when in my heart of hearts I am a feminine submissive. When I consider my womanhood, perhaps Yeats said it best:

*Be praised for woman that gives up all her mind,  
A man may find in no man  
a friendship of her kind  
that covers all he has brought  
as with her flesh and bone,  
Nor quarrels with a thought  
because it is not her own."  
-Yeats "On Woman"*

*Kitty is a student with a focus of Psychology and Creative Writing, living and studying on the East Coast.*



*Jen, continued from page 1*

based on zip code, age range, and sexuality/gender. For the latter, I could choose any combination of: guys/girls, guys/girls who like guys/girls, both who like bi guys/bi girls, or straight/gay/bi guys/girls only.

But why does it matter that I identify as bi? The fact that searchers can opt out of seeing my profile simply because I'm bi might imply that the site facilitates their biphobia. I don't think it's a leap to wonder if the techies behind OkCupid conflate bisexuality with polyamory or a penchant for threesomes.

Lest you think the queer sites are any better, I present to you *Curve*, a popular lesbian magazine that has been on the stands for 20 years and online for ten. Their online personals, run by TangoWire (which also runs Latin Lesbian Dating, Black Lesbian Personals, and others), offer you the choice between "I am seeking a Lesbian" or "I am seeking a Bi-sexual [*ugh, spelled with a hyphen no less*] Woman." This presents the same opt-out obstacles and implications as in OkCupid. Perhaps, here, the idea is that bisexuals should only date each other? Who cooked up that model of a dating leper colony – Dan Savage?

Even iPhone apps are getting in on the act. Grindr, a kind of electronic gaydar for queer men, allows you to click on a pop-up that says, "I'm straight or lesbian, and I want Grindr too!" Once you do, you can sign up for notification when they create a similar app for you. Your choices? "I'm a Straight Guy/Straight Girl/Lesbian." If websites are insulting in "othering" bisexuals, the apps do them one worse by purporting that we don't even exist.

Online dating sites have evolved, but not in the way that I expected. It seems that their willful ignorance of queer culture has become more specific. Times were, mainstream dating sites thought they could just stick "M4M" and "F4F" in their drop down menus and watch the queer money roll in. That actually hasn't changed at all; these sites continue to make no effort to provide a culturally appropriate template for their queer clients. They offer no references to butch, femme, or androgynous identities, no options to indicate how out you are, no choices outside of the divorced/single dichotomy.

Now there's just more ignorance surrounding minorities within minorities. Most queer dating sites even have the gall to reduce gender to a binary choice. (Don't look so smug, Gay.com. You managed to remember that trans people exist but you socially ghettoized them in your search menu in the same way *Curve* did bisexuals.)

Some sites get it right by taking a page out of the sexual health playbook and focusing on actions instead of identities. On Skout and Act4Love, you simply choose whether you're a man or woman looking for a man, woman, or both/either (although the question of gender queerness remains). The best format I've seen is on Lovetastic, a site for men specifically looking for a relationship with another man. The profile is mostly free-form and the search engine is just that: an empty field, like Googling for love. There's even a tag cloud, making Lovetastic the '10s answer for complex, unique queer male daters who want to search and self-identify comfortably.

The problem is, no one uses Skout, Act4Love, or Lovetastic, and to get the best results in online dating, you need to be where everyone else is (read: Match.com). My vision for the online dating future is that people in their 20s – the target audience of all such sites – will drive a Movement for Love by demanding culturally appropriate dating sites. Considering younger folks seem to prefer more fluid gender and sexual identities, change may be just around the corner. And that's good, because my love life is hard enough to navigate without technology conspiring against it.

*Jen is a board member of the Bisexual Resource Center.*

*Kanika, continued from page 1*

York City, trying out new things, taking up new hobbies, volunteering or getting involved with one cause or another. I discovered one of my favorite whim activities around the time I turned 30. I decided to try out for the local roller derby league just for the hell of it. After breaking my skates, getting more than enough bumps and bruises and injuring my ribs (before finding out I didn't make the team), I decided I was better off cheering on the sidelines. Although I may not be successful in some of my adventures, I am proud of myself for taking the risk and doing something different.

Another upside to single life is the ability to partake in all of those weird habits of mine. I can listen to my new favorite song over and over again (sometimes 100 times a day while singing completely off-tune) and view any movie from my Netflix queue at whatever time I want to. When I was dating, I felt I had to constantly maintain my appearance and it was exhausting! Single life has allowed me the privilege of occasionally "letting my looks go." Naturally, I don't go around looking like a complete slob, but it's freeing to be low maintenance. If I don't feel like shaving my legs, I won't. If I want to run around in sweats and sneakers, I can. If I look terrible in the morning, I have no one to scare but myself. I don't have to keep a significant other's interest by looking hot 24/7.

Does single life have its downside? It does. Every so often, I crave companionship and wonder what it would be like to fall in love. Admittedly, it would be nice to go on a romantic vacation or paint the town red with that special someone. I miss simple affectionate gestures such as holding hands and would be lying to you if I said that I don't feel a twinge of jealousy whenever a friend of mine couples up. However, the love of friends, family and a wonderful cat make up for the lack of romantic love in my life.

I know of so many people who lament being single. I feel for them because they don't appreciate how enriching single life can be. Flying solo for so long has allowed me to develop my best characteristics and be at peace with being alone. When "the one" comes along, I feel that not only will I have the best of myself to offer them, but I can also enjoy time by myself when they're not around. And boy, do I have some tales to tell my children if I ever have any! Should I meet someone tomorrow, I am more than open to welcoming them into my world. Until then, life goes on.

*Kanika lives in NYC. She is founder and Editor-in-Chief of the website RaspberryMousse.net.*



## Bi of the Month: Ellyn Ruthstrom interviews Denise Garrow-Pruitt

*I met Denise at the Bi Women's Rap at the Women's Center in Cambridge in the late 90s. She was a part of that thriving group for several years, eventually becoming its facilitator. After that, she facilitated the Married But Not Straight group at the Women's Center and branched off to start another similar group west of Boston. Her own journey from stay-at-home suburban mom to PhD professional educator is inspirational. I am uplifted by Denise's enthusiasm for life, her desire to help others, and her ability to tell it like it is. It was a thrill to sit down with her and share her experiences with our community.*

**Ellyn Ruthstrom:** What does the term "bisexual" mean to you? How does it apply to your life?

**Denise Garrow-Pruitt:** Freedom. That's what it means to me. Free to be me. Which is not something I can always say I've been able to do. It gives me opportunity to live the way I want to and not to have to justify it.

**ER:** How did you come to terms with your bi identity when you were coming out?

**DGP:** Not having to pick just one side or the other made it easier. If I don't have to clearly define anything, I can just live in that moment and not worry about it. That's where I feel my life is. There are places in between straight and gay. I always felt I can love this person or that person and I could change it up if I want to.

**ER:** Was it a difficult process in the beginning?

**DGP:** It was pure confusion. I think deep down I always knew, but I just never acknowledged it. Once I could acknowledge it and embrace it I was fine. I knew I could just be me and it didn't matter and there was no need to explain it all away.

**ER:** As a woman of color, how do you experience being an out bi woman in communities of color?

**DGP:** I can't really say that my color has had much to do with it. Most people in my life have been very accepting. Some of my flexibility comes from the fact of being a minority all of my life—you figure out how to maneuver around things. If people don't accept you, move on to people who do. I don't waste my time with people and their ignorance. But luckily most people accept. I do still have a few friends who are lesbian who just don't get the bi thing. Still trying to convert me and it's not going to happen. (Laughs.)

**ER:** You facilitated the Bi Women's Rap group and the Married But Not Straight group at the Women's Center

for many years. What did you learn through those experiences?

**DGP:** I discovered how to give to myself and how to take what I had learned and give it to someone else. It gets very isolating when you feel you are the only one and it can be empowering once you know how to live your life. It's been great for me because being an educator has helped me to learn a lot more about myself. And sometimes I wasn't brave enough to learn for myself but I did it for other people.

Living out in the suburbs is really tough for women who get caught in a marriage and later figure out it's not their real life's path and struggle with that. For a woman who's been married a long time, who's a stay-at-home mom, whose whole life is surrounded with husband and kids, finding that identity, and giving yourself permission to actually do it—you spend so much time taking care of other people and you never give to yourself.

**ER:** Do you think that support groups like those are important?

**DGP:** Absolutely. My quest was to find women who were newly coming out and help them get on the path where they needed to be. I wanted to be there because I know how very hard that is. Once they come to terms with where they are at and what they are going to do with their family I kind of feel that my work is done.

After several years, I realized how many hundreds of women I had helped, and realized my job was done here. It was time to step back and move on to the next part of my life. I needed to focus on me and my career for a little while.

Once I get to my next plateau I can give back again. Put some money into the community and maybe do something bigger. When I started out I was still a stay-at-home mom with no means of support for myself. But I've become very independent since then and have educated myself into a career, so now I can give back monetarily to the community whereas before I had nothing to give. I'd like to open a home for women to stay in during that transition time. That's my next thing. It's so needed. You know what you want to do but you just don't have the financial means to do it. And you have to stay because your only means of support is the husband, especially if you've never worked outside the

*Denise, continues on next page*





*Denise, continued from previous page*

home. A lot of women fall into that. It's noble to be that great mom and stay at home, but where does it leave you if you now have to become independent? I'd like to do something to help with that transition.

**ER:** How does it feel to live in Massachusetts where you can marry your girlfriend?

**DGP:** Oh, my god, it feels fantastic. I'm so glad to live here. I've always said that Massachusetts is the greatest place to live: the greatest hospitals, the greatest colleges, and now we have same-sex marriage. It's a perfect world. It doesn't get any better. In so many places, you can spend your whole life loving someone and you can't get married—what's that about?

**ER:** How have you experienced biphobia in your life?

**DGP:** I don't know if it's biphobia or if it's people just needing to be educated. It's interesting because when I do come out to people and I say, "I'm bisexual" and they say "What does that mean?" Oh, I used to be married to a man, now I'm married to a woman. The options are open wherever I want to go with this. "Well, aren't you going to be married to her forever?" Maybe. Maybe not. Who knows?

**ER:** Nobody knows.

**DGP:** Sometimes people think once you divorce a man and go with a woman you are a lesbian. No, the desires stay the same. You still look at a man and say, "He's cute."

We're living in a more educated society now. In the circles I travel in, people get it. And the kids—college-aged kids—they get it. Everyone is so sexually fluid. It's great to be among people who get it. But I want the older people to get it. And when you talk with them and explain more, they do.

**ER:** The theme of this newsletter is "Bi & Single." From your earlier experience of being bi and single...

**DGP:** I've never been bi and single. I was married to a man right up to the time that Rhonda and I entered a committed relationship. I haven't had a lot of dating time. I've had a lot of committed relationship time.

I'll tell you what I do remember. This is the core of the married women's group. When you are trying to transition out of that marriage and you are trying to find yourself and you are trying to find a relationship with someone who understands that you've just had this self-discovery about yourself, you can't go from A to Z in a second. What you have to do is transition out of the marriage, transition the family in a way that is going to work with your ex in your life and then find someone to be in your life who understands that the marriage is not over overnight. It's not realistic to think that there's going to be someone who says, "Sure, I accept you, your husband and your kids and I'm willing to take that

chance that you are going to stay with me and not go back to him." When you meet somebody, you need to be honest up front. I always tell people, "Do not lie to people. Never tell someone you are not married."

In the beginning, which would have been my single dating time, it was difficult because I was finding people that I liked a lot but I couldn't make that full commitment because I still had my husband and my children at home and they were my priorities. Then there was time for me and I was spending it with someone else. That time was limited and I had to go back home. And I found out over and over again, things would start out great with someone and then somewhere along the line they would say "What do you mean you're still with your husband?" Did you not get in every conversation that I was still married? "Yeah, I did, but I thought it would be over." But it really takes a good year for you to get out of a situation and be stable and that time is the hardest.

**ER:** What do you appreciate about the Boston bi community?

**DGP:** For me it was my lifeline. I did an online search and found the Bisexual Resource Center. Wayne was my first contact on the phone. I talked to him and he made me feel that everything was OK and he invited me to come out to a meeting. And I wasn't having it. I was not going public. Then I called back and I think I got Alan the second time. He was very supportive, and that made the difference for me. Someone said to me on the other end of the line, "It's OK, you're going to be OK. Doesn't matter if it's this week, next week, six years from now, we're going to be here." For me, that reassurance was the greatest thing. And I finally did get it together to go to a meeting. Wesley met me at the door and said he was going to walk in with me. Then I got a call maybe two days after the meeting, just checking up on me and saying, "We were just worried about you." When that voice came over on the phone, I was like, "Are you serious, you are calling me up?" Wow. "We want you to come back, we want you to know it's OK."

Wayne told me about the group at the Women's Center and gave me some contacts. I'm thinking, these guys are seriously helping me. It was so cool, no strings attached, no anything. And I started going to the Women's Center and met a slew of people and the journey began. I'll never forget that first call. It took every bit of strength I had to call. It was meant to be. Seven or eight years after that I asked them, do you remember me? And they said, "Sort of, but we get those calls all the time." Here I thought it was all about me.

**ER:** I want to use that as a commercial.

**DGP:** I don't think they realize what they really do. I wonder how many lives the folks at the BRC have saved and they don't even know it.

*Ellyn is a past editor of Bi Women and President of the BRC.*



## Bisexual Activists in the White House!

By Faith Cheltenham

I'm Faith, a proud bisexual black woman. I was thoroughly honored to have the opportunity to be one of three out bisexuals invited to the White House for the 2010 LGBT Pride Month Reception, the second such event held at the White House by President Obama to celebrate LGBT Pride. (There were actually at least two others, but they were there representing trans organizations.) I arrived early at the Southeast entrance of the White House with BBWN's own Ellyn Ruthstrom, who is also President of the Bisexual Resource Center. We joined many LGBT people of ALL COLORS excitedly waiting to be admitted. Upon entering, a nice man in military dress said, "Welcome to the White House!" And Ellyn and I just about died right there. Fortunately we had the foresight to keep our cameras out and snapping!

Before the President spoke we were allowed to roam the rooms and learn about White House history from docents who were stationed in every room. Many of the folks invited to this event were local, grassroots, youth and college activists and it was wondrous to be surrounded by activists of all colors, ages, sexes, genders and orientations in the "People's House." Amidst the historical antiques and portraits of presidents are seemingly new additions of African, Asian and American Indian art and sculptures. This was one of the nicest houses I've ever been in and I highly suggest that any and every activist visit the White House in the future. Once in a while we all need a reminder that our country is for people like *us*.

Ellyn and I got spots on the "rope line" and waited for



Bi-identified activists at the White House: Faith, Gunner Scott, Ellyn and Nancy Nangeroni.

the President to appear, hoping to get a good picture to share with all. When the President was announced, it seemed that all heads turned towards the announcer's voice and away from the door the President had just opened. All but mine, so I stood there simply agog at him in front of me. He was as charmingly funny as he's always seemed, quietly saying, "Well, here I am, guys, the President!" as he waited for folks to realize he'd entered the room. And I couldn't help but tell him, "Dude, you totally are!" This got him laughing and it was a nice moment to share. He shook hands down the row and then went on to

speak about what the administration has accomplished for the LGBT community.

Some folks feel it's not fast enough, and I can understand the rush: raise your hand if you enjoy being a second-class citizen! It was hard to sustain my feelings of frustration as I heard the President of the United States mention by name audience members who had lost a loved one without even being able to say goodbye. I also found comfort in President Obama's own stated frustration with the slow place in ending that abomination, Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Listening, you got the feeling, in this place, in this House belonging to all Americans, changes are still rolling out. I'm not ready to sit by and wait so I'll keep working for equality across all boundaries and borders. I'm compiling a list of all bisexual/pansexual/fluid orgs nationwide to send to the White House for future invites to our community. Please email me at [thefayth@gmail.com](mailto:thefayth@gmail.com) if you'd like your organization that works with or for the bisexual community listed!

*Faith lives in Los Angeles and is Vice President of BiNet USA.*

## Bi and Proud and Running Pride

By Amy Andre

This year at Pride, I wore a big button on my lapel all day that said "BI" on it. Why?

Last Fall, I was honored to be hired as the Executive Director of San Francisco Pride, the nonprofit organization that, among other things, puts on the annual LGBT Pride Celebration here in San Francisco. Putting on the largest celebration of its kind in the US – and one of the largest in the world – is a big thrill! But Pride is more than a party; it's an opportunity for community building, for political collaboration, and for civic engagement.

Wearing my BI button was a simple but effective way to show that we truly are everywhere, including leading the event! My boss (the President of the Board of my organization) is also bi, and so I gave her a button to wear with a bi pride

flag on it. The two of us are the official spokespeople for the organization, which meant that every time we were being interviewed on camera our Bi Pride was showing, literally!

If you haven't been to an LGBT Pride event in your area lately, I encourage you to go. One of the most important things that we can do as bisexual folks is show up, be out as bi, and be counted.



*Amy has a master's degree in Sexuality Studies (with a focus on LGBT identity) and an MBA in Nonprofit Management – both of which come in handy at work! The co-author of Bisexual Health, she can be found online at [amyandre.com](http://amyandre.com).*



## The Indian Bisexual Spake

By Apphia K.

Completely overwhelmed by the invitation to speak at the Queer Azadi Event in Mumbai, India this year, I was honored by the fact that I would be one of the first bisexual activists to give the bi community a voice. In contrast to my first experience representing the bi community at the Bangalore Queer Film Festival earlier this year, this was to be a public forum and there would be media present.

A little louder than the voice in my head that told me that I'd be the only bisexual there were my supportive friends and the knowledge that I would be speaking from the heart. L. Ramki, India's only other out bisexual activist, flew up from Chennai to show his support and have my back while friends who drove down to Mumbai with me stood at the side of the stage cheering me on.

What ensued was a total head-rush, and me silently thankful that I had written what I'd wanted to say on paper and remembered to bring it with me. I spoke about bi-invisibility, the fear of biphobia, the liberation of love, creating a tolerant and all-inclusive community, and the importance of us all speaking up together as one community demanding equality. Midway through my speech, in between cheers and applause, a transwoman from the crowd stood up and asked me to speak in Hindi. That's when I began to falter just a little bit. Luckily, a translator jumped to my aid and brought me safely to the end of the speech.

Did my action make a difference? I hope so. In the days leading up to the event and in the ones that followed I have only just realized the vastness of the task ahead of me. Making the decision to give my community a voice was easy; the follow-through is what will push me out of my comfort zone. This ongoing work is what will bring that change we wish to see, and education lies at the crux of this change.

*Young, restless and just the right amount of crazy; a bit old fashioned and unconventional at the same time, Apphia is a contributor to the Getting Bi anthology, the co-founder of Birds of a Feather, Pune's first visible LGBT support group and editor of Jiah: The Magazine for Women with Heart, the first magazine for Queer Indian Women.*

## News Briefs

By Katrina Chaves



- On the equality front: Argentina now has full marriage equality. The federal court of Mexico has upheld Mexico City's marriage equality law. Same-sex marriages performed in Mexico City will now be recognized throughout the country. And Proposition 8 in California, which took away marriage rights from not-yet-married same-sex couples has been struck down. Stay tuned as this decision is appealed and – hopefully – upheld.

- Vanessa Carlton, a Grammy-nominated vocalist, came out at Nashville Pride, telling her fans, "I've never said this before, but I am a proud bisexual woman." And this was not the only exciting "first" at Pride celebrations this June! The Bisexual Resource Center put together the first bisexual float in Boston Pride history, and celebrated its 25th anniversary!

- On August 1st, Logo ran a "bisexual marathon," airing movies like *Imagine Me and You*, *Bi the Way*, *Can't Bi Me Love*, *Bisexual Girls*, and *Three of Hearts*. While a day of bi documentaries and drama is pleasing to the bi eye, the bi/pan/fluid communities need more than token recognition, which is how some perceive these events to be in many forms of media (especially that which is owned by MTV).

- Speaking of biphobia, OkCupid has recently posted an incredibly biphobic study that they conducted regarding registered members. The controversial conclusion that OkCupid reached is that bisexuality is one of online dating's "biggest lies." Apparently, just because some bi-identified members only messaged one gender, this meant they were only pretending to be bi? Some have decided to boycott the dating website, and others are writing e-mails, protesting this ridiculous "study."

- In Iran, such pervasive biphobia and homophobia is life-threatening, as it is one of five Sharia law nations where homosexuality is punishable by death. Recently, a 23-year-old bisexual man, Amir Hossein, was arrested by the Basij militia while having dinner with his girlfriend. According to the organization Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees, his sexuality was well-known amongst his friends, and it is unclear who reported him to authorities. He was beaten to death by Iran's security forces.

- From August 26th to 30th, the UK national bisexual event ('BiCon') combined with the International Conference on Bisexuality to create the largest bisexual event ever seen in the UK! BiCon is an annual convention for bisexual people and their allies, and this year's BiCon was the UK's 28th – making it "one of the longest continuously running LGBT events in the country." Stay tuned for a report in the next issue!



"God made me Bi": A marcher in the bi contingent at the Pride London's Parade 2010



## Calendar, *continued from page 16*

**Thursday, September 23, Celebrate Bisexuality Day (CBD) & Bilicious, 7:30pm, Club Café.** Celebrate the BRC's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary & the premiere of Bilicious in Boston with an evening of fabulous bi performers on the stage of Club Café. Music, comedy, spoken word & more! Support the work of the BRC & enjoy a great night out on the town. Details: [www.biliciousproductions.com/Events.html](http://www.biliciousproductions.com/Events.html). Tickets available online at [biresource.net](http://biresource.net).

**Friday, September 24, Dyke Night's Fourth Fridays at the Milky Way.** The Brewery, 284 Amory Street, Jamaica Plain.

**Friday, September 24 & Saturday, September 25, Fenway Health's Helpline Volunteer Training.** 1340 Boylston Street, Boston. If you self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or genderqueer, & have 5 hours per month to spare, then you can join the Peer Listening Line & GLBT Helplines of Fenway Health which provides info, referrals & support to LGBT & questioning callers through its anonymous toll-free line. Info/registration: Joanna at [jwisch@fenwayhealth.org](mailto:jwisch@fenwayhealth.org).

**Saturday, September 25, Queer Carnevale, Mardi Gras in New England, Tri-County Fairgrounds, Northampton.** Sponsored by the LGBT Coalition of Western Massachusetts, a day full of music (Melissa Ferrick, Antigone Rising), comedy (Mimi Gonzalez), drag (All the King's Men) & more. Info: [www.lgbtcoalitionwma.org/carnevale.html](http://www.lgbtcoalitionwma.org/carnevale.html).

## October

**Wednesday, October 6, 6:30-9pm, BliSS.** Bisexual Resource Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. (See September 1st)

**Saturday, October 9, 10pm-2am, Dyke Night's Second Saturday at Machine.** 1254 Boylston Street, Boston.

**Monday, October 11, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See September 13<sup>th</sup>)

**Tuesday, October 12, 7-9pm, BRC Board Meeting.** (See September 14<sup>th</sup>)

**Wednesday, October 13, 6:30-8pm, AIDS Forum.** Where are the bisexuals in the HIV/AIDS epidemic? Bisexuals often get blamed for the spread of AIDS, but this time we'll explore how AIDS has affected our community. Sponsored by the Bisexual Resource Center & Harvard's LBGGS. Details at [www.biresource.net](http://www.biresource.net) closer to the date.

Join us at BBWN's  
fabulous potluck brunches  
for bi women and our friends. Our  
brunches are held in women's homes,  
and ALL women are welcome.  
See our calendar for details.



**Saturday, October 16, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See September 18<sup>th</sup>)

**Sunday, October 17, noon, BBWN Brunch in Cambridge at Jen's.** Please bring a potluck dish &/or drinks to share. Info/directions/RSVP: Jen at [jbonardi@hotmail.com](mailto:jbonardi@hotmail.com). A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

**Thursday, October 21, 7pm, BliSS.** (See September 1st)

**Friday, October 22, Dyke Night's Fourth Fridays at the Milky Way.** The Brewery, 284 Amory Street, Jamaica Plain.

## November

**Wednesday, November 3, 7pm, BliSS.** (See September 1st)

**Sunday, November 7, noon, BBWN Brunch in Arlington at Deb & Gina's.** Please bring a potluck dish &/or drinks to share. Email Deb at [debmo345@gmail.com](mailto:debmo345@gmail.com) to RSVP/get directions. A great opportunity to meet other bi & bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

**Monday, November 8, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** (See September 13<sup>th</sup>)

**Wednesday, November 10, 7-9pm, BRC Board Meeting.** (See September 14<sup>th</sup>)

**Saturday, November 13, 10pm-2am, Dyke Night's Second Saturday at Machine,** 1254 Boylston Street, Boston.

**Thursday, November 18, 7pm, BliSS.** (See September 1st)

**Friday, November 19-Sunday, November 21, Transcending Boundaries.** Worcester, Massachusetts. A weekend of education, social activism, research, & support for persons whose sexual orientation, sexuality, gender identity, sex, or relationship style do not fit within the binary confines of male or female, gay or straight, monogamous or single. Details: [TranscendingBoundaries.org](http://TranscendingBoundaries.org).

**Saturday, November 20, 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch.** (See September 18<sup>th</sup>)

**Friday, November 26, Dyke Night's Fourth Fridays at the Milky Way.** The Brewery, 284 Amory Street, Jamaica Plain.



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## The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

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### Ongoing Events

#### 2nd Tuesdays

7-9pm. at 29 Stanhope Street, 4th floor, in Boston. All are welcome.

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#### 2nd Mondays:

**Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** 7pm. Email [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com) for more info.

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#### 1st Wednesdays, 3rd Thursdays:

**BLISS: Biseuxal Support & Social Group,** 7-8:45pm. Meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

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#### 3rd Saturdays:

**Biversity Bi Brunch,** 11:30am at Johnny D's, Davis Square, Somerville.

*Sign up for our new email list!*

*Send an email to: [biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)*



## Ask not what Bi Women can do for you ...

Help us send *Bi Women* to you, to other women, and also to community centers, youth and campus LGBT groups. Think of the support that *Bi Women* has provided to you, and give generously because your contribution will indeed make a difference in many, many lives. It will only take a minute and you will make a difference.

It costs \$5000 to keep *Bi Women* and BBWN going for one year. No donation is too small (and none too large). Suggestion donation, for those who are able: \$20-30.

Make your checks payable to BBWN, PO Box 301727, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Or you can donate online via paypal to [biwomenboston@gmail.com](mailto:biwomenboston@gmail.com).

**Remember: YOU can make a difference.**

## CALENDAR

### SEPTEMBER

**Wednesday, September 1, 7-8:45pm, Bisexual Social & Support Group (BliSS)** meets monthly 1st Wed. & 3rd Thurs. at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope Street, Boston. All bi & bi-friendly people of all genders & orientations welcome. 1<sup>st</sup> Wed. meetings. are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. 3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs. mtgs. are 7-8pm check-ins, discussion, & announcements followed by social time at a nearby restaurant. Only want to socialize? Meet the group at or shortly after 8pm in the lobby of the BLC.

**Saturday, September 11, 10pm-2am, Back to School Dance Party.** Dyke Night's 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday at Machine, 1254 Boylston Street, Boston.

**Monday, September 13, 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning.** A peer-led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Info: [kate.e.flynn@gmail.com](mailto:kate.e.flynn@gmail.com). Meets monthly 2nd Mon.

**Tuesday, September 14, 7-9pm, Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting.** All bi &

bi-friendly community members welcome to attend. Info: Ellyn at [president@biresource.net](mailto:president@biresource.net). Meeting at the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. near Back Bay station on the Orange Line.

**Thursday, September 16, 7pm, BliSS.** (See September 1<sup>st</sup>)

**Saturday, September 18, 11:30am, Bi Brunch.** 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays at Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq. in Somerville. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street. Great way to socialize & find out what is going on locally in the bi community.

**Sunday, September 19, noon, BBWN Brunch in Arlington at Steph's.** Please bring a potluck dish and/or drinks to share. Let's concentrate on fall foods. Email Steph at [smiserlis@gmail.com](mailto:smiserlis@gmail.com) to RSVP/get directions. A great opportunity to meet other bi & bi-friendly women in the Boston area.

**Sunday, September 19, Out in the Park, Six Flags in Agawam, Massachusetts.** Have a fabulous outing with the LGBT community in the state's largest amusement park. Besides the usual rollercoasters, rides & games, there will be music, comedy & drag performers including JujuBee from *RuPaul's Drag Race*. Details: <http://outinthepark.info/>.

**Calendar, continues on page 15**